

Telling Absence: War Widows, Loss and Memory

Jaana Loipponen

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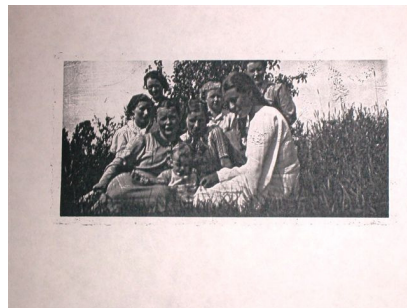
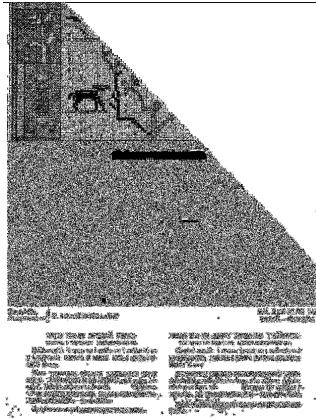
Declaration

This thesis has been composed by me, is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:

Dated:

What will my 'text rug' of memory and telling look like?



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I started with my postgraduate studies in the University of Joensuu in Finland, and produced and submitted this doctoral thesis at the University of Edinburgh. Along the way, I met with too many interesting and dedicated people to be able to name them separately, but my sincere thanks go to each, from the personnel in libraries to my fellow postgraduates and academic colleagues. My particular thanks to Professor Liz Stanley for her advice, support, encouragement and endurance during the process of writing my thesis. Due to her company and coffee plunger, many insecure mornings were turned into productive working days.

My youngest daughter, Manda, was born during my postgraduate studies. Neither she nor her older siblings Cian and Annabella have always understood why I would want to sit in my study and write; without them, I might have forgotten how much fun life can be during those odd hours when not writing a doctoral thesis. My husband and writing companion Jan-Erik has occasionally looked for some of his books which may have ended in my library, but then he has been seen in the vicinity of my book shelves, too, and not only for the purpose of inviting me downstairs for a cup of coffee.

I started this research with my grandmother in mind and I will finish with her in mind too. She was explicit in her desire for me to become a Doctor, and I hope I have made her happy.

Abstract

This thesis concerns feminist sociological analysis of war loss and its consequences as experienced and told by Finnish Karelian war widows of World War 2. They lost their partners and had to leave their homes by force, when Karelia was evacuated twice in 1939–1944. Over 400,000 refugees from this ceded South-Eastern area were permanently resettled elsewhere in Finland. Finnish war widows' telling of history has been missing from academic research, for this the subject has not been investigated prior to this present work.

The research material the thesis reports on was gathered in interviews with five Karelian war widows, through examining Karelian life stories in the Finnish Literature Society's Folklore Archive, and also researching war widows' assistance pension letters in the State Treasury. The research process proceeding in three stages over time and with the materials intersecting and overlapping in both the research encounters and in the analysis of them, something the thesis theorises using the conceptual term 'narrative's long exposure'.

A participatory and dialogical approach has characterised the research encounters, drawing on the work of Smith, Schutz and Levinas. The researcher's own background and Karelian family history has been a part of the enquiry, guided here by Ricoeur's notion of 'close relations' and proximity as a dynamic relationship constitutive of memory and its production. Each telling and each research encounter has been read in an analytically reflexivity way, and an intellectual auto/biography of the researcher at work has been provided as suggested by Stanley, with the centre of attention being on how 'knowledge' is produced.

Seriousness, generosity and humour prevailed when the war widows told about their lives as patterned with hardship and change. This attitude and device for telling was interpreted as an expression of how to get on with loss, which was also one of the analytic themes that arose from the various tellings that the thesis investigates. Another key theoretical theme is that of 'war's times', a conceptual term which highlights the widows' tellings as an ongoing archive of war, inclusive of wartime events, to living with the consequences of war ever since the war started, right up until now.

Prologue: Locations, Or, “To Question Everything”

During a visit to Newcastle, where at the time I was studying, it struck me that I had to be travelling. It was only logical that I was travelling. And I did not know then, that within six months I would continue my studies in another city, Edinburgh in Scotland. The logic that struck me, combined with the opportunities and hazards of travelling, was that it was necessary for me to be on the move in order to understand my subject-matter: what happens when a person faces severe losses and has to leave home, and for an unknown destination? My losses in repeatedly leaving home had been minor compared with the Karelian evacuated war widows that I interviewed for my research, but the feeling of those transitory periods in my life compared with the feeling of belonging enabled me to a small extent to share a sense of loss and leaving with them. Looking for a place to stay and to belong to after having left home is common to all those people who have set off and then sat in trains, boats and airplanes, trying to figure out what is it that lies ahead of them.

Changing locations and home also tests one's built-in values, categorizations and fixed ways of seeing. For a war-time refugee, the experience is a hard and bitter 'must'. In carrying out social science, it can encourage one to recognise one's own situation and the awareness of the relativity of meanings that comes from changing location. During the process of researching and writing this PhD thesis, I have simultaneously had an office and a home study in three cities in three countries and repeatedly commuted between them, in Finland, England/Scotland and Sweden. The homes, offices, countries and languages have changed, but in these varying combinations the amount of work desks has stayed the same, six, which means two in each city, a 'university office' and a 'home office'. At times, the continuous vagabonding involved has been a bit puzzling, but at other times looking across these 'six angles' of my desks has also been a great benefit. Six sides make a hexagon, and this is how I have tried to mentally picture my situation. I am sitting in the centre of a hexagon, those six tables around me; and when I turn, a new view glides into view. Simultaneously, this movement has led to a kaleidoscopic turn from the centre, in

which the sides and their views have become organised into a new constellation, or rather a number of new constellations, that have influenced ‘the view’ from the centre.

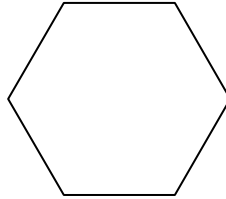


Figure 1. Six work desks/a hexagon/a kaleidoscope.

In other words, when the location and focus has shifted, I have correspondingly had to check my point of view. This process has constantly brought me to re-confrontations of my own way of thinking. One of the results has been to show how nationality can write history almost to the point of blindness, and how in a foreign environment this becomes easier to detect and possibly to ward off.

One small example of this occurred when I was working in a northern Swedish library, in Umeå university, and checking the library catalogue for a book that I knew, *Karjalan kuva [The Image of Karelia]* (Sihvo 2003) [1973]. The following piece of information suddenly stared me in the face: “Keyword: Karelia, Russia”. I was at first startled by the placement of the book under the sub-heading of Russia, since its topic is Finnish Karelianism, an artistic and cultural movement in the 1890s inspired by the same mental and physical landscape that is the environment in the *Kalevala* (1835 and 1849), the national epic of Finland. However, this moment of surprise was quickly over, since it took only seconds to remember that the Karelianists indeed travelled to Eastern Karelia, which never was a part of Finland.¹

¹ Karelianism developed in a political and economical direction in the 1920s, which also led to geopolitical aspirations about a so-called ‘Greater Finland’, with a program to incorporate Russian Karelia and the Finnic tribes there to Finland (Paasi 1996, p.127; Sihvo 2003, pp. 404–406). Attempts to establish this ‘Greater Finland’ were made during WW2, when a part of Eastern Karelia was for a while occupied by the Finns, who tried to convert the local

Besides this, if I had remembered right away the full title of the book, this would have also helped explain the catalogue entry: *The Image of Karelia: Background and Phases of Karelianism During Autonomy*. In other words, the Grand Duchy of Finland (1809–1917) was a part of the Russian empire.

I was not only caught unawares but was also perplexed by my own reaction. I was surprised about the deeply patriotic feeling in myself, which soon felt also worrying, since this ‘know-all’ researcher ego of mine had been detected in replacing facts with pompous nationalism. I had to admit how, even after becoming aware of my mistake, I still tried to justify it because the most eminent Karelia-researcher, Hannes Sihvo (2003) [1973], has carried out research on a major Finnish movement that involved the Finnish Karelia-enthusiasts who were known to object to the attempt of Russification. Swedes should know better, I thought, about how sensitive Finns would be about it, cataloguing it like this. Sweden had, after all, also lost Karelia to the Russians.² But I could not continue bearing a grudge, since obviously in the Swedish library system the name of the book was the determining factor and the basis for its classification. When back in Finland, I also checked the book, and its cataloguing in Finnish libraries avoids facing geography and politics and just places it under ‘Karelia’.

However, even though the politics behind the library systems is interesting, the most worrisome aspect for me was to notice how strongly patterned one’s own thinking can be. Basic thoughts and assumptions are rarely disputed, horizons stagnate, and ‘absolute truth’ creeps in to displace debate. Consequently, this incident in the library was powerful in provoking re-thinking on my part. I had started my whole thesis research project around questioning history regarding the absence of a group of

Finno-Ugric population ideologically and drive the Russian population out of the area with force (Jussila, Hentilä & Nevakivi 1999, pp. 201–202; Kirby 2006, pp. 222–229; Laine 1998, pp. 235–239). Some of the occupied Karelian villages were the same ones where the Kalevala poems had been collected. It was the first time these villages were visited again since the 1920s when the border had closed (Paavolainen 1982 [1946]).

² In the Middle Ages, the supremacy of Finland was fought over between Sweden and the Russian principality of Novgorod. Karelia was divided, and the eastern part came to be later known as Russian Karelia. In 1709, Peter the Great invaded the Finnish-inhabited lands from Sweden, and in the Napoleonic wars, Russia finally conquered the rest of Finland. (Vehviläinen 2002, pp. 1–2).

women who had participated in the war but who had not been heard about since. Yet, I had not really confronted my own thinking, since after asking this question it then became a dogma, ‘my claim’, or rather ‘the truth’. Now a small crack in the cup of history made me once more aware of the need to scrutinize much more thoroughly all aspects of thought constructions and ‘truths’. In Penelope Lively’s novel, *Moon Tiger* (1991, p. 14), the main character, Claudia, a popular historian, describes the moment at which she discovered that ‘history was not a matter of received opinion’. She was a schoolgirl of thirteen and copying down the names and dates of the Tudor Monarchs from the blackboard. The teacher was Miss Lavenham herself, at Miss Lavenham’s Academy for Girls, and she was characterizing Queen Elizabeth, her good deeds but also the fact that she “cut off the head of Mary Queen of Scots, who was a Catholic”. Claudia put up her hand: “‘Please Miss Lavenham, did the Catholics think she was right to cut off Mary’s head. ‘No, Claudia, I don’t expect they did.’ ‘Please, do Catholic people think so now?’ Miss Lavenham took a deep breath: ‘Well, Claudia’, she said kindly. ‘I suppose some of them might not. People do sometimes disagree. But there is no need for you to worry about that. Just put down what is on the board. Make sure your headings are nice and clear in red ink...’” (Lively 1991, pp. 14–15).

Instead of carrying on with her work, Claudia put down her pen and pondered. The results of that pause and ‘worrying about’ history have long-term effects: her headings do not stay nice and clear and she fails in the end of term exams. For me, that moment of ‘putting down my pen and pondering’ has taken place several times during this project of my PhD work, with one of the more crucial ones being the experience above concerning the library catalogue. Just one word put into a context that I responded to (Karelia, Russia) and I stopped copying, and not only started to question what I was looking at, but also in a way was awoken to disagreeing with how I had allowed myself to think about the project more generally. In other words, my moment of discovering that history is not a matter of unquestionable facts also fertilized the idea that it is not ‘just history’ that I have to think about, because I also have to constantly confront my own way of thinking about this. In this thought-construction, or rather re-construction, ‘being away’ from home and belonging

played a major role. Without being subjected to a new cataloguing system in a new location, I would not have had to juxtapose two systems of thinking and become aware of my own hidden assumptions. Furthermore, where did I place Karelia? How are the classification systems built and used with what effects on ourselves as well as on society?

This study, then, is about locations and positions taken during the research and writing process of my PhD. Researchers tend to think of their PhD thesis work as a journey, which is something I can totally agree with. Journeying for me has been both the physical circumstances and the contents of the mental endeavour of this work, and somehow they have begun to feel the same. Added to this, the changing circumstances, the continuous confrontations with ‘how I used to think’, and the new directions which I have then explored as a consequence, have turned out to be fundamental to the whole research. I may have started with my main research question being about Karelian war widowhood, and even more fundamentally about loss, but it soon grew to a rhizome of inter-connected questions: What is war? What is time? How to tell about time? Indeed, how to tell? And above all, how do I know and what can I claim to know? Accordingly, my doctoral research has developed in two directions; one has been towards trying to understand loss, and the other towards reflexive thinking about what I have been doing. New developments and reflexivity characterize most research, of course (or ought to). In my own case, there is a material explanation for this, too. This thesis presents material collected from many work desks and from my picking things from cardboard boxes each and every time I have packed and moved from one study to another. In, and in-between, these different locations I have worked as a kind of a ‘bricoleur’,³ trying to patch together coherent answers to all the questions the research has raised, by using the material

³ ‘Bricoleur’ and ‘bricolage’ are used in a variety of ways and they are much debated terms, starting from Claude Lévi-Strauss use in *The Savage Mind* (1966) [1962]. At least two schools seem to exist, one which sees a bricoleur from the Lévi-Strauss point-of-view, as a make-do whatever is at hand approach, or, ‘bricolaxe-as-praxis’ (Lincoln 2001, p. 693; Boisvert 2003). The other school expands the meaning towards a more theoretical ‘making sense of the world’ understanding (Kinchaloe 2001, 2005). The closest to my own understanding is Weinstein and Weinstein’s (1994 [1991]) reading of how Georg Simmel worked, in using parts of things which are appropriated for new uses (see also Yardley 2008, paras 12-13).

that has been available just there and then, and adding ‘a link’ (>) mark after a paragraph or a chapter, to point out to myself a possible connection when the material in question seemed to be somewhere where I was not. At times, the perfectly organized hexagonal desk shown in Figure 1 has not facilitated thinking, but has instead produced walls which have shut out the researcher-I.

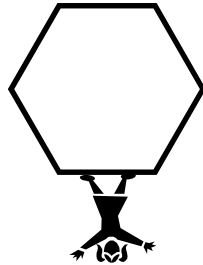


Figure 2. Six work desks/a hexagon/a practical barrier to thinking (still, good exercise)

In accordance with this, my research notes for, and also draft parts of the thesis, have been written in more or less episodic ways, due to this concrete material problem of how to hold everything which was scattered together, a problem which existed on top of the normal ‘not seeing yet’ nature of all PhD theses. However, this fragmentation of my researching working experience has also corresponded to my ontological and epistemological position. The world is complex and it requires variation and active enquiry to take place within the epistemological standpoint of the researcher, because there is no ready-made set of theory that could be applied to address the multi-layered structure of what I have sought to understand. If there had been, I could have carried around that One Book, instead of scratching together the ways and means for thought wherever I was at the time and reworking these later.

It was my supervisor who pointed out some similarities between how I was working and what Walter Benjamin did, which is not to say that either she or I compared my work with Benjamin’s achievements. Walter Benjamin had the war and the Nazis looming over his shoulder when he was writing his *Das Passagen-Werk* (1927–1940). In the end, this was never completed but, perhaps precisely because of its

fragmentation, it has still been of great importance for many people in their intellectual upbringing and search.⁴ For my Masters thesis (a long time ago), I gathered information in Paris and obtained permission to work in the Bibliothèque Nationale, where I spent hours in mind-work with Benjamin, strolling in and out the arcades of Paris and the boulevards of Haussmann, just looking and admiring, and trying out different openings to thinking while working in the same building in the centre of the arcades where he had last worked on his huge collection.⁵ Indeed, the process of thinking through and writing this thesis brings my mind back to his work, in particular that Benjamin (1990, pp. 376, 379)⁶ used the word ‘montage’ to describe his goal for the form he was developing in the Arcades Project.

If this idea of montage is accepted as a term for both the process of work and the result, that at first a lot of inter-connected material is gathered, and then this is arranged into new constellations, then I believe my work too has the qualities of montage. Yet, differentiating it from montage, although the project has gone in a number of directions, is that nonetheless there has been a solid kernel to it throughout. From the very beginning, I have wanted to tell a story of a woman, any woman, who has lost something important because of a contingency, a war. Her story is not known and she tells her story for other people to know what happened. All this takes place in a society like ours and says something about this world in which we live. The main focus is on lives lived and told, and on the fact that war is not an abstraction. One day this contingency, war, becomes a part of life and then nothing is the same ever again. When this happens, it is too late to question why it became so. This is why wars have to be told and questions about their effects constantly asked, together with questions concerning the meaning of telling and also the meaning of asking.

⁴ “(...) those with a keen interest can just glance across their study towards the guilty, sagging Benjamin shelf” (Coles 1999, p. 9); on my shelf there are, for example, Hannah Arendt, Susan Buck-Morss, Susan Sontag and Kia Lindroos.

⁵ My Masters thesis was about Finnish writers in Paris 1880–1940 (Loipponen 1991). On Benjamin’s Arcades Project, see Buck-Morss (1989), as well as Benjamin.

⁶ *Das Passagen-Werk* was translated into Swedish in 1990, and this translation was used in Finland together with the German original, before the English translation was available.

What Claudia in Moon Tiger sees when she puts down her pen and ponders, after which she will never again fail to question assumed truths, is an opening to an understanding that history is not about truths and ‘not asking’. Or as Adrienne Rich (1979, p. 13) astutely comments concerning women as enquirers of the world, what results is: “To question everything”. History is about differences of opinion and truths contested; the lives of people are the stuff of history, people are at the centre with their strengths and weaknesses, agreements and disagreements: “And suddenly for me the uniform grey pond of history is rent; it is fractured into a thousand contending waves; I hear the babble of voices” (Lively 1991, p. 14). To hear them, to record them, to remember and to tell of their “constant active presence” (Rich 1979, p. 14) is both needed, and essential.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Vyborg, Finland/Vyborg, The Soviet Union

Three trains daily run from Lahti railway station, in Southern Finland, to Vyborg, in Russia. These trains are called *Sibelius*, *Repin* and *Tolstoy* and take 2:25–2:44 hours. In November 1939, this was an entirely Finnish journey. Nobody would have guessed that in March the following year, 1940, Viipuri would be ceded to the Soviet Union and become a part of that state. This operation required the evacuation of more than 400,000 people from the ceded area of Karelia where Vyborg was located, in the South-East of Finland. Large numbers of evacuees travelled via Lahti, because of the direct St. Petersburg train line connecting Vyborg and Lahti, and many stayed there.⁷ From where I live now in Lahti, it is ten minutes to the station. I sit in my home office as I am writing this and try to imagine the railway station full of tired war refugees. Who were they?

“We got married. Then the war started.”⁸

Helmi Parikka: You see, it was like this. We got married. Then the war started.

Jaana Loipponen [JL]: Was it in the summer of thirty-nine that you got married?

Helmi Parikka: It was at Midsummer when we decided that, well, we will get married in the autumn.

JL: So, you really did not have much time, it was...?

Helmi Parikka: No, we did not, it was...

⁷ During and after the Winter War approximately 4,300 evacuated Karelians moved to Lahti, a city of 25,000 inhabitants. Already by September 1940, Lahti had the second largest number of Karelian business enterprises (70), after Helsinki, the capital. In 1948, over 10,000 evacuated Karelians were estimated to have settled in Lahti (Huovila 1996, p. 38–39; Huovila 2005, p. 77–81).

⁸ Interview with Helmi Parikka (her name is changed) on 5 July 2001.

(...)

JL: And, when you got married in the autumn, then your husband was called in to the army right away?

Helmi Parikka: Yes. He had to leave immediately. Already earlier, August or September, in all the parishes near the border, and around the shores of Lake Ladoga, men were ordered for fortifying the batteries. And it was at this time we knew that we'd perhaps have to leave but we did not really believe it then. In November we were told to start to get ready in case of having to leave. In the morning of the thirtieth my sister went first to the cow shed. After she had milked the cows, she came running back in and told us to come and look at how the whole border of the Metsäpirtti side is all flaming red. So, it started then. Children, adults and the elderly had been transferred already earlier, so only the ones who stayed with the cattle were left. And womenfolk and then elderly men, and young boys. Then they [the Soviets] dropped leaflets from the plane and threatened to cross the Taipale river on Independence Day. It was eighteen kilometres from our place to that river. In consequence, it was quite horrible that Independence Day. And then, the old men who were named as the ones to come and inform, they went from door to door, with the message that we would have to leave in six hours time. Get yourselves ready, take two changes of clothes and food for six days. We tried to put on as many layers of clothes as we could. It was forty kilometres to Käkisalmi and it was quite freezing, and we had all the cattle of the village to take care of.

JL: In other words, this means that you left right after Independence Day?

Helmi Parikka: It was...

JL: December the eight?

Helmi Parikka: The seventh.⁹ We left in the morning of that day. We only took the cows with us. Everything else stayed, the lambs, the

⁹ Independence Day is on 6 December. Helmi Parikka stated that they were given six hours to leave. Although she only talked about Independence Day, I suggested that she had left "right after" it. She agreed, but she corrected me when I first referred to 8 December and said that she left on 7 December. Later I wondered why I had tried to name a later day in the first place, not to mention two days after Independence Day. I traced this at the time very intuitive decision to my 'peace-time thinking' versus her 'wartime telling' (see Transformative Practices of Reading in Chapter 5). From the 'perspective of peace' it felt too intrusive to suggest that she had to leave on a national holiday or even a day later. My generation has only ever experienced peaceful and celebratory Independence Days, with a special aura of an important day of rest attached to this day, which takes place in the middle of the darkest season of the year.

calves, and all the rest of the animals, they stayed behind at the farm. We were told that the army would take them along.

JL: Your first destination was then Käkisalmi and from there?

Helmi Parikka: There we were loaded onto open carriages, over forty cows for each one. There was one closed carriage for the ones with the cattle. Then, a train ride towards the unknown started, we had no information about where we were heading.

JL: You weren't told the destination?

Helmi Parikka: No. And then many cows died on the way and calved, too. We had so many, we did try to take care of all of them.

JL: From home, you had taken these couple of extra pieces of clothing, some food and the cows, otherwise...

Helmi Parikka: Everything stayed there. We had some soldiers staying in our place, Lieutenant Varjo and also three second lieutenants, they were in the back room. We had had the house renovated earlier in the spring, both in and outside the house. The roofs were renewed and also from the inside all the roofs were fixed. These soldiers they told us that we would not have to stay away for a long time, that the Soviets will be chased away. So everything will be, the lieutenant said, everything will be in order. He said he could put two men to live there, to look after the rooms, too. When the peace came, the old men were allowed to return, and my father-in-law went back. He brought the horse with him and some more clothing that we had packed in the storehouse. So we had some more clothes. We did not have to use the same ones all the time. (Helmi Parikka 2001, pp. 4–9)

In an official telegram, the events of the Finnish–Soviet border early on 30 November 1939 were brusquely described: “Karelian Isthmus: the Soviet artillery opens fire at 6.50 a.m.” (Onttonen 1999). Sitting in my study, I ask what this must have meant for those who woke up to the artillery fire happening next to their homes. For Helmi Parikka, the coordinates of space and time invoked in the telegram, the Karelian Isthmus on that early Thursday morning, meant her village, landscape, fields, forests, as well as her social, cultural, and emotional environment: all that she could see around her and relate to. This research follows her telling of life and

.

tellings of the lives of four more Karelian women, Bertta Kaukinen, Kyllikki Iloranta, Sylvi Ahola and Eeva-Liisa Röntö,¹⁰ as these were expressed by them in the interview encounters between them and me. They told back to wartime and also to the time before the wars, and from there towards and indeed past the present moment of telling these events. For the interviews, they were approached by me as women who were widowed during the Second World War but in particular because they were evacuees from Karelia.

Later in the course of this thesis, I shall also discuss the tellings of Tyyne Koli, Impi Sinkkonen, Marjatta Kainulainen and Anna Kuismanen, whose life stories I explored in the Folklore Archive of the Finnish Literature Society, as well as of Lahja Salonen, whose war widow's assistance pension application file I studied in the State Treasury.¹¹ In addition, many more widowed women's stories have been consulted during the research process. However, a reference to quantity is relevant here only in the sense of the different accounts adding to a more varied overall view of the how and the what of war widows telling about their lives, losses and the consequences of these losses. The focus stays with the individual person and her experiences, although the researcher's presence is a part of the process.

In Finland, World War Two is counted as three related wars, the Winter War (1939–1940), the Continuation War (1941–1944) and the Lapland War (1944–1945). The estimated number of Finnish war widows is around 30,000, which is based on the

¹⁰ These names are all pseudonyms, but they are chosen from sources that have to do with the world of this research. There are first names of my relatives who all lived in the same village in Karelia, and their surnames too, but never in a recognizable combination. The other names are of Karelian origin, as well.

¹¹ Until 1941, war widows and their children were compensated for their loss of a husband according to the 1938 Military Injuries Law, which was based on the military rank of the soldier. The most common sum paid was the equivalent of the carpenter's salary for two months (Salonen 1995, pp. 14-15). Two dependent children doubled the assistant's pension. The Winter War caused such damage that new legislation was needed, but the principle remained the same. The War Widow's Work Law was enacted in 1943, providing assistance with looking for a job and settling in a new place, study loans and support for war orphans. Decisions about pensions were made in the Accident Bureau until 1948, then renamed the Accident Office, and finally in the State Treasury. After the Continuation War, two strong organisations representing the widows were formed, providing economic and other advice and assistance (Salonen 1995, pp. 17-18, 24-28). The war widows in my study all participated in their weekly gatherings and still do so.

highest number of those who ever received a war widow's assistance pension from the State Treasury. However, all the war widows were not registered as such, for a variety of reasons (Salonen 1995, p. 14). For example, one of my five interviewees never gained an official status as a war widow, although she herself and the people around her thought of her as one. There is no exact calculation of the number of Karelian war widows, since the statistics did not classify the pension applicants according to their original place of residence (inquiries to Statistics Finland and State Treasury). The place of origin is provided in the actual applications, though, and so if needed the applications could be sorted through looking for this, which is how I worked while in the record office of the State Treasury.

The women in my study come from the Karelian Isthmus in Southern Karelia, Ladoga Karelia and border Karelia belonging to Finnish Karelia.¹² These areas formed the South-Eastern part of Finland until 1940, when Karelia was ceded to the Soviet Union, as specified according to the Moscow peace treaty (13 March 1940). The area was retrieved in 1941, but lost again in 1944. Consequently, the population of the region was evacuated twice; all the women in my study experienced these two mass operations. After the Continuation War in 1944, only nineteen Finns stayed in the ceded area (Häikiö 2005, p. 1095). Karelia was the largest ceded part of the country, but also other areas had to be ceded or leased, starting from the Baltic Sea upto the Arctic Ocean.¹³ The loss of land in Karelia included three major cities and several industrial sites; for example, Viipuri/Vyborg was modern, international and the second largest city in the country. Altogether, Finland lost twelve per cent of its land area, slightly over one-tenth of its cultivated land. Of the 430,300 evacuees (twelve per cent of the population at that time), 406,800 of them were Karelians (Raninen-Siiskonen 1999, pp. 12–15). The resettlement policy required a land

¹² These three parts of Finnish Karelia were culturally, economically, linguistically and religiously heterogeneous. The language was mostly Finnish, but in Border Karelia the majority spoke the Karelian language. There the religion was Orthodox, whereas in rest of the country it was Lutheran (see Häyrynen & Raivo 2004; Raivo 2002).

¹³ In addition the areas that were included in the Moscow peace treaty of 1940, Petsamo, the northernmost gateway to the Arctic Ocean, was also ceded. The Porkkala peninsula area was leased for 50 years as a military base (returned 1956). Three hundred million dollars' worth of goods at 1938 prices had to be paid as war indemnities (Jussila, Hentilä & Nevakivi 1999, p. 222–223; Kirby 2006, p. 231–232).

acquisition law (1944), based on which 2.8 million hectares of land was requisitioned and used to provide land to the displaced people, ex-servicemen, those disabled as the result of war, widows and orphans (Kirby 2006, p. 287). Sixty per cent of these people were Karelian (Häikiö 2005, p. 1094).

Individual, War, Loss, and the Researcher

This research started with questions about ‘what happens’ when a person loses. I had thought of the barest situation of loss: when nearly everything that has been considered solid and important is lost, and one has to continue in changed circumstances. Very soon ‘war’ became the context for this that I was most interested in exploring; and following from that, it seemed natural that it was war widows who would be at the centre of my study. The reason for calling this natural is as follows and was perhaps biographically originated. First, I thought of war as constantly repeating itself in Europe as a landscape for expulsion and migration, and then I thought of this in combination with what it means to lose a home, to leave, and to become a refugee. I had the Balkan wars in mind, the most recent example of which has been the former Yugoslavia falling into pieces. This war took place in the middle of ‘my Europe’, meaning that I was the first in my family to travel to Europe and to concretely realise that ‘Europe’ was only a few hours away from Helsinki. Europe was found, both its East and its West, and even that division then collapsed together with the Berlin Wall. Everything was a mere train ride or a flight away, when I heard the news about the siege of Sarajevo (1992–1996). War was no longer ‘somewhere far away’, it was in a location that was in my passport.

In January 2006 I travelled to Sarajevo. My task was to assist a cultural delegation and to write as a journalist of the first moments of peace in the city. It was not peaceful, though. For safety the buses ran in the night and took long roundabout ways; then also the hilly roads were dangerous of mines. The landscape of war was one of skeleton houses, bullet holes and broken windows. Once in Sarajevo, the sound of machine guns pierced the nights. I interviewed people who every day for over three and half years made the decision of choosing which side of the road might

be safer for walking on their way to work and back home. They had learnt to estimate the locations of the snipers that shot into the city from the surrounding hills and chose the 'safe' pavement accordingly. This short stay in Sarajevo had long consequences for me: the experience of travelling in the night through a landscape where the moon shone through the bombed and abandoned houses and listening to the sound of the machine gun in the night never left me (Loipponen, 1996a, 1996b; Loipponen & Lundström, 2000). Moreover, following from my long-term interest in the visual arts and writing as a free-lance journalist, the work of certain artists, mostly concerned with documentary expression, made me pay attention to wars even further away, to disputes, genocides and conflicts over land and identity in places such as Kurdistan, Rwanda and Somalia.¹⁴

Finally, this combination of war and the idea of 'away' brought me much closer to home and my own background, as a granddaughter of a war widow who had lost both her husband and her home because of war. Losing a home is not necessarily connected with war widows, but my paternal grandmother was from Karelia and lost her home there because that whole area, as well as other nearby places, was ceded to the Soviet Union in World War Two. Due to this combined concern for what was happening in the world and with my family history, the 'person' who loses became defined as a Karelian WW2 war widow, and 'loss' was focused on losing a partner and a home because of war.

¹⁴ See for example Susan Meiselas' work on writing the history of Kurdistan, *Kurdistan – In the Shadow of History* (Meiselas 1997; see also <www.akakurdistan.com>), for which she gathered material for six years in Kurdistan, including family snapshots, official photographs, documents, maps, often in very difficult circumstances (Loipponen 1999). Alfredo Jaar (1995) ended up placing his first Rwanda photographs in sealed boxes in 'Real Images', when it became impossible to express the losses he had witnessed in any ordinary manner (Levi-Strauss 1998, pp.26-7). His Rwanda project (1994–1998) 'Let There Be Light' (Jaar 1998) developed to show the eyes of those who had witnessed the genocide (see also www.alfredojaar.net). In 'A Camel for the Son', Fazal Sheikh has photographed Somalian women in a refugee camp in Kenya. 80 % of the refugees are women and children (Sheikh 2001 p.11). This is the first project in Sheikh's International Human Rights Series (see www.fazalsheikh.org; see also Loipponen 2002).

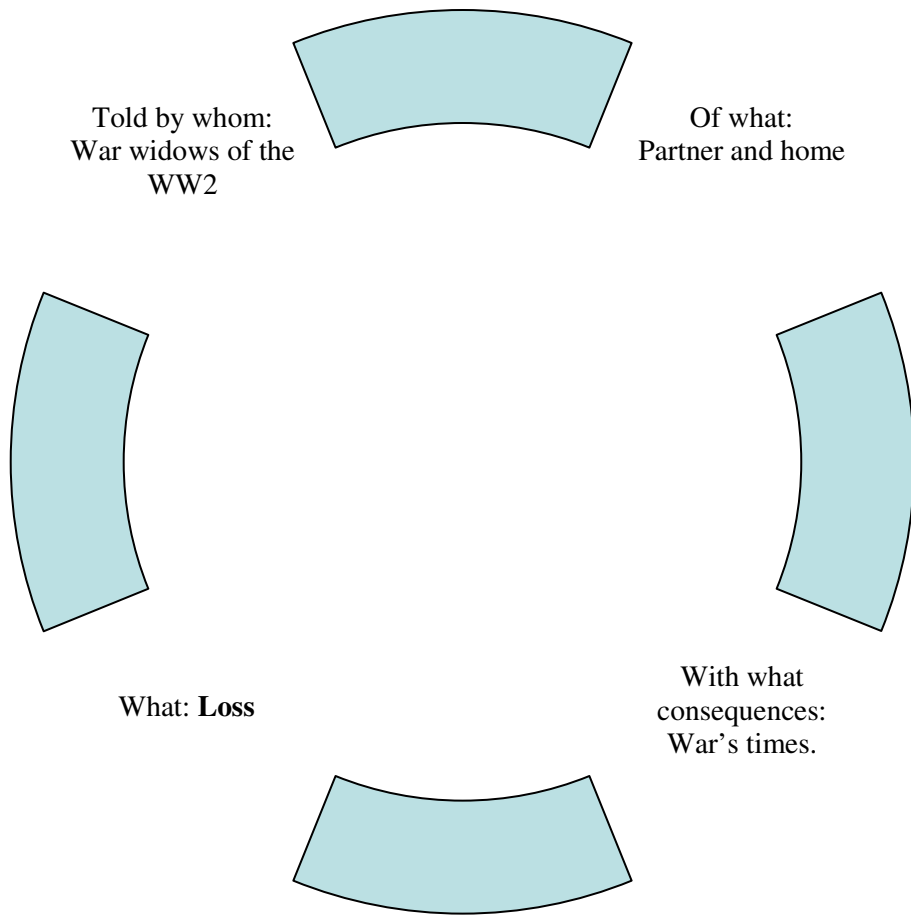


Figure 3. Loss as a point of departure (first version, see also Figure 4)

Obviously, placing war widows conceptually before their loss distorts the temporal order of what happened. The women that I interviewed were not war widows before they had lost their partners, and they were not 'Karelian' war widows either, before they had left Karelia. If Karelia had not been lost, they would have become 'just' war widows, without the attribute Karelian being attached to them. However, my choice was practical. I could have written 'told by whom: a person', which would have been more true to my project of understanding personal experience, and then after adding to this 'of what', I could have added 'war widows', but this would have overcomplicated a simple matter. This thesis concerns research about people that

experience loss, particularly because of a war, and for this purpose I have interviewed war widows and gathered other material concerning them.¹⁵

However, Figure 3 misses out a name that is relevant, indeed central, to this research, which is the name of Karelia. Karelia holds a special place in telling the story of the nation in Finland. It is in many ways thought of the ‘origin’ of the country, both geographically as Old Finland, but even more powerfully mythically as an expression of what it is to be a Finn and a nation (Komulainen & Gordon 2006, pp.165-7).¹⁶ In Figure 3, Karelia is momentarily absent, although throughout the study I will try to show that first a home was lost, and then Karelia, and this needs to be paid attention to since it has not been discussed in ‘post-war’ discourse.

‘Post-war’ is also a term that I use with care, which is why in Figure 3 ‘with what consequences’ is described as ‘war’s times’. I have created this concept of ‘war’s times’ to consider the long-term effects of war on people’s lives, something which is not at all adequately expressed in the concept of post-war. ‘Post-war’ in effect excludes the time now, and simultaneously reduces possibilities for a dialogue between ‘now’ and ‘then’, both as a transgenerational discussion and as a relevant topical and even a political issue for a debate. I will return to this subject particularly in the chapter on ‘War’s Times’.

Explaining the ‘chosen’ flaws in Figure 3 points up how this research started and where it has led, although I still have to add one more missing factor, which is the presence of the researcher and the idea of the researcher encounters. The absence of the researcher and the research encounter would be paradoxical in a piece of research

¹⁵ Individual war experience during and after the war is the main theme in a book presented as ‘new military history’, which is the first of its kind in Finland (Kinnunen & Kivimäki 2006). In this book, my chapter concerns the pension applications of war widows to the State Treasury, as an ‘extended war history of losses’ (Loipponen 2006).

¹⁶ As explored in Fingerroos & Loipponen (2007), a side-track from this thesis work. With a fellow researcher, we were thinking how to answer questions about our motivation for writing about Karelia, a subject that is much debated, and as a result we collected and edited a collection of modern research on Karelia, *Interpreting Karelia Anew*.

which claims to use as its method and approach participatory memory work together with dialogical encounters. Moreover, the exclusion of a researcher who is a woman of Karelian extraction would be particularly paradoxical in a study which claims that the stories of war widows have been neglected in two ways: they have not been listened to as war stories, and as stories told by Karelian women they have not been heard as stories of the losses they experienced and which shaped their lives.

However, this absence was not a chosen strategy, and realizing it made me ‘see’ what was wrong with the overall research structure, and indeed with its fundamental intellectual position. I conceived Figure 3 at a fairly late stage in my research process, but when I was still trying to sort out my thinking and stance. With the help of this simple presentation of the core ideas, I wanted to point out how all this might appear easy but that was not how it had been in carrying out the research and analysing the research materials. I decided to engage around image-based concepts with the structure of my thought-process and its relationship to my writing. I called this ‘thinking through image-scenes’, and while it turned out to be helpful, something was still missing from it. Figure 3 shows the problem.

When I wrote above about that I was thinking and telling through images, I did not comment on the fact that this had as its base the encounters with the widows. Also, I did not include the fact that it was me who produced the story through my ‘gaze’, which is also a “constant active presence”, to repeat Adrienne Rich’s (1979, p. 14) comment quoted in my prologue. Neither the research encounters nor my presence are shown in Figure 3. I had tried to separate out two spheres: that of the war widows and that of me. In my effort to decode the “difficult and complex messages left for us by women of the past”, I had not “come together telling our stories” (Rich 1979, pp. 13–14). This showed up as practical problems in the text I was writing, in the form of compartmentalisation, so that the structure did not properly come together. I tried to tell ‘their story’, and then provide ‘my interpretation’. Revising the image-scenes helped me rethink the research as a whole and then move on to explain what I do as a researcher, or to quote Stanley (1990, pp. 3–4), when I am “analytically reflexive”.

Consequently, the research encounters I engaged in are termed ‘reflexive encounters’.

The concept of loss in Figure 3 was also poorly defined, because of simplifying the presentation of the process. In Figure 3, ‘loss’ was indeed in contradiction with how it had apprehended in the first place. Originally, ‘loss’ was the starting point ‘for what follows’. I was reminded of this when an article of mine was peer-reviewed, and one of the comments for improvement was about the need to conceptualise loss. This was a valid comment, although I did not agree with the specific suggestion of how to do so because it made me realize that I never planned to position the widows in respect to psychological theories about loss. I was not opposed to this, and had drawn from such ideas for my study, but I sensed an underlying assumption in these theories that war widows were ‘representatives of loss’, which was what I was trying to avoid. The question of ‘what happens when a person loses’ was my point of departure, and in this question I had included, implicitly I have to admit, the notion of ‘what is made of loss’ thereafter.

In a newspaper announcement about my research and leaflets I wrote for potential interviewees, I expressed my research as concerned with “postwar survival stories of Karelian war widows” (Loipponen 2001, Appendix 1). Notwithstanding all the reservations I soon felt about that wording, it indicates that my stress was on finding out about the widows around taking care of their family as a single mother in a new place, looking for work and establishing themselves. The background to this was that I wanted to avoid the ‘usual’ stress of research on Karelians, which concentrates on them ‘losing Karelia’. With both of my grandmothers as examples, being a widow did not seem to me to epitomize loss in the psychological sense of being defined by this. In my world, these matriarchal older women could do anything. However, this does not mean excluding the psychological effects of loss, such as grief and mourning, from my research, but it means that they need to be seen in relation to the social. In their introduction to *Loss*, Eng and Kazanjian (2003, pp. 1–2) refer to Benjamin’s historical materialist way of establishing a dialogue with loss and its remains, as Benjamin embraces the connections between the past and the present.

Eng and Kazanjian see this as a moment of production. Attaching this creative element to loss, they admit, might sound counter-intuitive, but after asking ‘what is lost’, one also asks ‘what remains’. I am reluctant to promote the ‘educational’ element of hardship and loss, yet the truth is that simultaneously with the moment of ‘giving up something’, something else starts to take place in one form or another, developing over a period of time. Consequently, the emphasis in conceptualising my research shifts from ‘how loss is experienced’, to ‘what is made of loss’, to ‘what losses lead to’, and also to ‘how losses are received and read’.

As will have become obvious by now, the research design I had visualized needed revising and expanding from its elementary mode. In Figure 4, the researcher presence is included, as well as ‘loss’ being somewhat more fully represented:

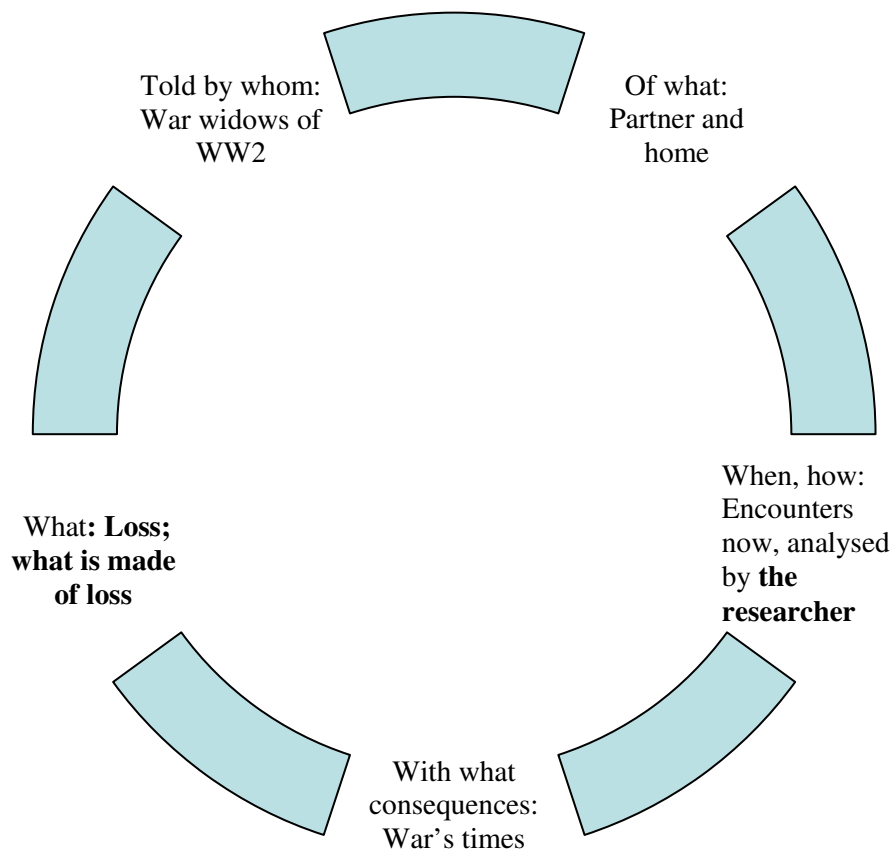


Figure 4. Revised research design (see also Figure 3)

Instead of just presenting the revised version of the research design, I have decided to include both versions, as this kind of a ‘new take’ on the problem at hand has been emblematic of the whole research process, and is illuminating of the reflexive pattern in this work. The weight of my approach has been on the action of revisiting a thought and ‘building on’ to it, in the process of accumulating knowledge. In developing it, I have drawn on Gadamer’s dialogic and its practical and active mode of understanding (Gadamer 2004a, 2004b). In the next section, ‘Puzzles and Epiphanies’, the process that led to my revising the research design is explained in more detail, and the ‘final’ version of the research design is also presented, with its emphasis on the many-layeredness of the research encounters.

Puzzles and Epiphanies

As just indicated, I underwent a process of revising or re-focusing some of the main ideas concerning the researcher and researchee relationship in my study. After rather many detours, it appeared that I had been struggling with the ‘wrong’ problem. I had concentrated my efforts towards finding the right form and format for what I had been trying to say, and I had worked for a break-through on this to take place. In reality, however, this emphasis on ‘finding the form’ or structure was a part of the problem, as the bigger issue turned out to concern clarification of what I wanted the form to express in relation to what I was doing. Furthermore, this led to questions about my approach to and understanding of what counts as research. I shall discuss a research epiphany that occurred, which further develops my thoughts concerning image-scenes and reflection, with these being joined with my memory of a wall rug and the notion of participatory memory work.

However, before this epiphany, there was a long ‘looking through a glass, darkly’ period in my research. I was near to giving it up. It was a late summer’s evening in 2006, the end of the most tropical summer ever recorded in Finland. The outer conditions were not ‘dark and stormy,’ but it was soon going to be the third September from when I had started the research, with the submission date for my

thesis approaching, which caused a dark and stormy tumult inside my head. I longed for my office in Edinburgh, the peace of it, but I was trapped in the middle of domestic things and could not leave them. It was increasingly difficult to concentrate on thinking and about scientific work, even though this was the time when it should have been easier. I sat down totally exasperated, well away from my computer on the opposite side of the table from where I usually sit. And this was after yet another attempt to re-arrange my office after moving into a new home. There seemed to be a parallel between these two frustrations. I could not get the room together, nor the research. I knew that I definitely wanted to tell of these women, these amazing women, but I did not know how to do it.

In this moment of exasperation I looked around in my study from the new angle of where I was sitting. Placed on the window sill, a photograph caught my eyes. This was a portrait of Elizabeth Johnstone Hall, a fishwife from Newhaven. She was photographed by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, a famous pair in early photography. I had bought the print in Edinburgh because it is an engaging portrait, strong and clear in composition, taken of a working woman who appears totally oblivious of the camera's seeking eye. She looks aside, as if contemplating something, but her look is not that ethereality often attached to women in portraiture. She is rather strong, physical and composed, in charge. It is a brilliant photograph, it has light and shadow, a moment frozen yet full of action; Barthes might say, as is often quoted from *Camera Lucida* (1981), that it is a studium of a fishwife and fishing life and it has a punctum, an unexplainable force piercing through it and emerging from it.

"She could be a widow in the moment of the photograph, she might just not know it", I thought. Anybody could, as could I when I was sitting upstairs, be unaware of what one had lost. I did not think that Elizabeth Johnstone Hall was preoccupied with the worry of losing her husband, but perhaps the punctum of the photograph is this immanence of life's temporary nature: the photograph is even captioned "It's no fish ye're buying, it's men's lives". The fishwives had to be constantly aware of the hazards of the trade and the possibility of their men not returning from the sea. I

looked at the photograph in my room, and I wondered what its subject had been thinking when the photograph was taken. This thought led to another, around an image, or rather a scene, this time a product of my mind. I imagined my grandmother at the moment when she was leaving her house in Karelia. The war had broken out and people had to flee their homes. She and her baby boy were evacuated. She did not know where her husband was, other than that he was out there somewhere fighting in that same war that was now ejecting her from their home. I imagine this was rather an abrupt intervention into her life, the way a war just starts, even though the atmosphere and the prospect of violence might have been looming over everything for a good while. Her fishwife-sister Elizabeth Johnstone Hall, sitting and holding her wicker basket, thinking, being photographed (one of the first working women in the world to be photographed¹⁷), was perhaps even more aware of the possibility of sudden changes. In the Newhaven image, one can nearly smell the uncanny presence of the sea and the dangers it represented. In this other image that my imagination had produced, I could hear the war machine roaring in the distance, not that far away. However, I do not think either of these women was really thinking of ‘losing’: their minds were set on much more practical things. In my grandmother’s case, she could not afford to think of anything but gathering the most necessary belongings for her and her 10-month-old son to take with them. January that year had been exceedingly cold (temperatures even as low as -49 Celsius were measured) and mid-February was also a very cold period (17 February -33 – -39 Celsius).¹⁸ The order was to take with only what one could carry,¹⁹ which meant that the people fleeing tried to wear several layers of garments. While packing, my grandmother did not know that her husband had already died by then, shot in the head by another soldier.

¹⁷ Stevenson (2002, p. 114) writes about Hill and Adamson Newhaven calotypes as the invention of social documentary photography.

¹⁸ The literature on the Winter War is vast, as in the internet coverage of its events, see for example <www.winterwar.com>. The weather, among other things, can be followed week by week.

¹⁹ “Take only what you can carry!” was the advice and order for packing for the evacuation journey. This became the name for a published collection of Karelian life stories now stored in the National Literature Archives (Kilkki 2004, reviewed by Loipponen 2005). A small selection of the archived biographies is also used as material in my study.

I thought of these two women and that there are random or haphazard aspects of our lives, of what happens and the consequences that unfold. In my mind I was with these two women, thinking that I knew nothing of the next moment. Anything could happen concerning the sea, the war, life, and their ultimate unpredictability. We just carry on, whilst something that we do not know anything about and certainly cannot control might have already happened, and this will affect our lives much more than the things we have carefully planned and organised. For Elizabeth Johnstone Hall, for my grandmother, for myself, life is a capricious enigma. I knew little of the life of a Newhaven fishwife in the 1840s, I had learnt that I knew little about my grandmother, I could not claim that much knowledge of the lives of my five interviewees after spending some hours with them, while knowledge of my own life seemed equally evasive. But there was one thing in common between us: none of us knew about the future, it was a puzzle for us all.

It was these two visual contemplations, and the words enigma and puzzle I associated with them, that put me on a new trail concerning my thesis. Following these thoughts, I contemplated my computer screen and the piles of papers around it. A puzzle existed about the nature of my work. Nonetheless, instead of feeling defeated I related positively to this word. The visual and the thought images of these women were puzzles, and so too were the lives that I had encountered in my five research encounters and the many more in the archives, no matter how hard I tried to make sense of them or to 'puzzle out' their meaning. I could grasp something, but most of it I could not – they remained an enigma to me, and that was why the picture of Elizabeth Johnstone Hall gave me such immense pleasure.

Elkins (1999, pp. 14–16)²⁰ suggests that pictures are seen as puzzles and reservoirs of ambiguous meaning because of the human desire for complexity, and this desire is answered through the inherent quality of images that call for intellectual work. This also applies to research, especially when it deals with the issues surrounding 'told lives', and so I should accept also the 'puzzle' basis of my work because I had never

²⁰ Elkins (1999) uses Derrida's (1987) notion in *The Truth in Painting* when he talks about desire. His interpretation of Derrida is that there is a form of desire for interpretation that specifically pertains to pictures.

considered and more strongly had rejected reconstructing it ‘as it was’. My aim was rather to pay attention to how these widowed women tell their stories now, given their over sixty years perspective on their lives, and to analyse our encounters. I was tracing a thought-process and engaging with epistemological questions, and this is what I should endeavour to show as the centre of my research effort: the focus could and should be on ‘how I have asked and keep asking’. My research subject was already in itself a multi-layered one, to which I had contributed myself by gathering material in three phases, over three years (research encounters – Karelian life stories – pension application letters). The result should, I thought, mirror this complex field that kept producing new questions; and even its form could do this, I realised. In this there was the structure that I had been looking for. Suddenly I envisaged how the thesis could be written more visually, constructed of these epistemological puzzles organized around images that were meaningful for the research.

Of course, being a writer, I quickly moved back to my computer and wrote down a new contents page that, instead of Part 1, started with Puzzle 1. Even just naming the entries as puzzles was a relief, since by doing so I was attending what was being said by the women that were the focus in my research. That did not make me an expert on their lives, but a co-listener of some fragments of the lives told about, and this sense of openness and engagement was supported by the idea of lives as puzzles. Stanley (1992, p. 7) states that claiming expertise by a researcher is always complex and problematic because of her own socially located and necessarily partial viewpoint. Amongst the literature that I have read during the research process, this view is the most frequent I have come across. However, to provide the ‘how’ necessary to avoid giving the impression of ‘knowing’ the life of the ‘subject’ is not easily done. Stanley (1992) calls for multiplicity, analytic and argumentative detail and accountability, both in seeing the biographical subject as a member of many networks, and also in producing an ‘intellectual auto/biography’ of the researcher at work. The readers should be informed of what facts and evidence are constitutive of interpretations made and, especially, why. This requires an analytical, rather than a descriptive, approach (Stanley 1990, pp. 3–4).

At least for me as a researcher, having this presence in my own work has been difficult to reach. The problem is less one of not wanting to tell about the deliberate choices made, more of not noticing the value of all that happens during the long processes of thinking and writing. Now, in relation to the images of Elizabeth Johnstone Hall and my grandmother and the thoughts they provoked, I was reminded of the importance of the idea of intellectual auto/biography. This should be pursued, not only because evidence should not be withheld, but also because the resulting thesis should in some sense correspond to the intellectual inquiry taking place. In my own research process, images and questions concerning them had been a relevant part of the project from the beginning, starting from a photograph of my grandmother as a young woman in the market square in Vyborg. This photo was one of the key factors that led me to think more about the consequences of war. Some of the images I had with me long before the research began became an issue, others of them I had taken, gathered or received during the project. However, I had not thought of these pictures together as the connecting thread for the whole research. Notwithstanding their importance in producing thoughts, nor their elementary meaning for exploring certain research issues, they had still been separate images in my mind, perhaps even dislocated attachments to the text. However, now they became a joined sequence which 'was' the research in a fundamental sense.

Simultaneously with writing up these 'puzzles', I started to look for the photographs that I had in mind, although I could not find them all at once. Different working spaces, countries, suitcases, everything was scattered; and, also characteristic of my migrations, images that I had put up on a wall or on my desk I had had to pack again in the next moment. Consequently, instead of hanging up my personal exhibition of the images and other material in question, I moved into drawing. This sketching became a kind of a 'scene of events' that my research included, a storyboard, and I kept wondering why I had not drawn one before. Correction: I had been drawing, figures that were images with arrows, lines and loops, and headings. I could not see how I could do better at that point; but now, with creating a storyboard, the research started to structure itself. What is more, this story included people; not just 'issues', words and ideas. I commented earlier that the centre of my research was telling a

widowed woman telling her story, yet in the earlier Figures I produced this ‘subject’ was an abstraction. I thought, now, that this was the epiphanous moment in my research journey. Through the photographs I could think and write, and they also provided the structure for doing this. This felt like a new kind of freedom and strength entering my work.

This possible power of a visual encounter is described by Gillian Rose (2000, pp. 563–564) around her sitting in her study looking at three postcards from the Lady Hawarden collection that was her research interest. In her study space, “the photographs became a part of my self. They mattered greatly to me, in ways I know I cannot fully explain; they gave shape to a desire I was struggling to write, a desire not entirely reducible to academic demands, a shape that actively helped me” (Rose 2000, p. 563).²¹ This feeling still lingered, its “dynamic excessive to disciplining demands”, even when she went to the archive, where the photographs “threatened [her] and [she] them”; and she recognized a “grid of the archive”, which directed her looking at the photographs (Rose 2000, p. 564). In parallel, my ‘archive’ too had been restricting me; but this eased when I turned my gaze away from how I had thought I should work, to the windowsill where I encountered the puzzle of Elizabeth Johnstone Hall. Turning back to the research, the energy of this visual encounter made it possible for me to proceed.

However, the question of precisely how to link the images and the text remained. In trying to establish this, I returned to Figure 3, in which I had placed loss as the point of departure for the research. Placed side by side like this, the storyboard and both versions of the research design signalled an answer, but of a strange kind, regarding my intentions for the research. It was immediately apparent that I had omitted from both of them one person, the researcher-I, myself, just as I had done in the first attempt for a research design in Figure 3. The initial idea about researcher involvement was not visible in the visual exercise of the storyboard, another

²¹ The magic of the photographs is erased for Rose (2000, p. 568) when she is confronted with the social difference of the people photographed, and she removes these postcards from her study. I keep wondering, though, why she did not place the three original ones side by side with the new ones of the workers in the collection, if she wanted to show solidarity.

epiphanous moment. On a concrete level, I was not included in any of the images for the storyboard; and in relation to the design, I had not included the 'researcher' as a word, along with those of 'loss', 'war widows', and 'war's times'. Consequently, there was no explicitly expressed binding factor between the triangle of the text, the thought, and the form or structure of writing. Where was the reflexive encounter that I had suggested crucially occurred between the researcher and the researchees? And what was my relationship with the images, and even with the research itself?

In this process of once again 'questioning everything', my research design was revised, and the result can be seen in Figure 4. The researcher was added and the concept of loss was further explained. Simultaneously, the photographs received a new interpretation. Instead of regarding them as 'pictures', I understood that my approach was closer to perceiving them as 'scenes of events', or 'image-scenes', with which I dialogued. This dialogical reflexive approach was a characteristic of all my research writing, not just concerning the image-bound aspects of it. Consequently there was more to excluding the researcher presence than just a visual 'error'. My abstract thoughts about what counts as research and my practical realisation of it in research writing seemed to clash. This was, I concluded, not about 'how to know', important though that is, but about ontology, since this reflexive approach had dropped out, been 'vanished', as a corporeal existence and presence. My conjecture was that including 'myself and my family history' had been too intimidating, even though I thought of this idea in the abstract in a positive light. I had come close to writing through myself while contemplating the images, but the old school approach of 'objectified and pure' knowledge hung over my research. I simply did not dare plunge into the research with the inherent knowledge that I had. The researcher who was talking had no face. Perhaps it was this avoidance that had adversely affected my ability to work. Rose (2000, p. 569) quotes Kaplan (1990) in commenting that, for conventional historical scholarship, the private process of knowledge-making is erased as soon as it "succeeds in producing a bit of truth." This 'conventional scholarship', in my case perceived as old school 'real research', was equally constraining on me, even when I had been claiming the opposite.

This is perhaps a rather surprising dilemma, given the basic feminist arguments made long ago about the researcher's involvement, the personal, the value of experience, the role of emotions in research practices (see Cotterill & Letherby 1993, pp. 67-8; Stanley 1994, pp. 33, 146). However, when I should have articulated a research strategy that also involved the research encounter and 'me' and make this visibly apparent, I did not do so. This new realisation is expressed in Figure 5, in which I consciously emphasize that in my research I work in an analytically reflexive and dialogical way in all the interview encounters, with the textual material, and also regarding the concepts I work with. As noted earlier, this framework for my research is one I have termed as 'reflexive encounters', by which I mean self-reflexivity and critical reflection about what goes into these encounters, what takes place in the unfolding dialogue, and how to analyse the resulting process, as well as reflecting on what this means in the context of the social world. Engaging with the 'I' through reflexive practices I regard as equally important as discussing the grounds for non-reflection.²² However, I regard reflexivity as a critical part of the researcher's ethical practice, as is often pointed out in research that uses qualitative participatory methods, such as interviewing, and from that viewpoint it is a necessary part of the process (regarding interview encounters, see for example Holland & Ramanazoglu 1994; Letherby 2002; Duncombe & Jessop 2002; Guillemin & Gillam 2004).

²² An interesting example of 'wondering about' reflexive writing and including aspects of the self in the research process and research writing is by Davies, Browne Gannon, Honan, Laws, Mueller-Rockstroh and Bendix Petersen (2004), who examine themselves at work in a collective biography. Their predecessors in including the researcher in the research and examining this as a process of knowledge-production are Stanley and Wise (1983, 1993), as the best-known example.

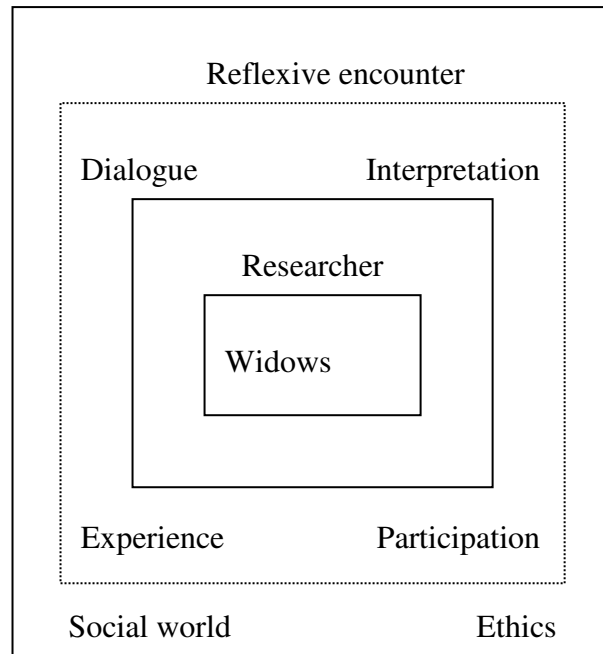


Figure 5. Reflexive encounter (see also Figures 3 and 4)

Grandmother's Wall Rug and Participatory Memory Work

The ideas of puzzles and epiphanies, and of image-scenes and reflexive encounters, are further joined together through another central notion in my research, which is 'participatory memory work'. The background to this is again trying to involve the personal in the research, given that my work both uses other people's memories and combines those with my own. In this way, my reflexive encounters resonate with a critical understanding of autobiography, expressed as 'auto/biography', a concept which combines both biography and autobiography and a close analytical examination of the reciprocal relationship between them (Stanley 1992). Although some people have used this concept as just the combination of the two genres (Stanley 2000, p. 42), the original stress is on scrutinizing the meaning of this organic interrelatedness and from this questions such as, 'whose version' of life prevails, and 'what constitutes the "I"' come into view. My interpretation of participatory memory work, as well as reflexive encounters, consequently draws on

auto/biography and its problematising of such matters, especially brought out in ‘feminist auto/biography’ (Stanley 2000, p. 45).

In exploring these terms, the metaphor of a wall rug is useful. To be precise, this metaphor stems from a particular wall rug, which is my grandmother’s *ryijy*, her wall rug. Using handicraft and weaving as metaphors in relation to life stories is common, with examples in theoretical essays (Rich 1979), autobiographical writing and research (Vilkko 1994; Vilkko 1997; Makkonen 1997), and in fiction (Atwood 1996). In postcolonial studies too, often in connection with life writing and told lives, textile metaphors have been used (Minh-ha 1989, p.128; Hirsiaho 2005, pp. 314-8), while even the pre-history of the digital revolution has been found in women’s textile work across cultures (Plant 1997). Dorothy Smith (1999, pp. 9–11) uses the metaphor of a Persian carpet or a rug to explicate her own way of doing research, investigating ‘how a particular piece of the social is woven’ in her analysis of ruling relations. Smith’s approach comes close to how I use the metaphor of a wall rug structurally to present accumulating knowledge, the process of layering fragments of oral and written life stories, archival notes, memories, and so on. Above all, it is because of my grandmother’s skills in handicraft and her *ryijy* on the wall in our childhood home that the metaphor of a wall rug is present in this research, because it was grandma’s *ryijy* that called forth the process of remembering for me.

My grandmother’s niece, my second cousin (as a child I never thought of her as my cousin but rather as my aunt, as she was older than I was), brought up the wall rug in a discussion concerning my grandmother.²³ I regarded this conversation as a pre-interview for my research, which meant that our meeting was not just ‘between relatives’. I had not met with her since my youth, even though as a child I often visited her with my grandma, or she visited us, with ‘us’ living at my grandma’s house which was also my childhood home. I had to check the way to her home on the map, because it was not only after a long break that I was driving there, but also that I drove rather than cycled there, and this time from the direction of the city, not from

²³ Minoo Alinia realised that her grandfather was an immigrant only after she had started a dissertation on the Kurdish diaspora (Alinia 2004, pp.21-2).

my grandma's place. Nevertheless, when I stepped into her house, everything felt very familiar. I glanced to the place where journals were put to see if they still were there; a reading child appreciated visits to relatives according to the material to browse that the house offered. A pile of magazines was on their usual shelf, and I felt more at ease.

This was the first time since my grandma's death, thirteen years before, that I had asked anybody about her life. I had been very close to her, and until I started with the research project, I had considered her as 'my grandma', with no adjunct attached. I do not think that the idea of her being a widow, or a Karelian war widow, had ever crossed my mind as a child. I had to first think of other women in the context of war, before I could connect her to war and to widowhood and Karelia. During the process of my research, people often commented to me that they remember their grandparents talking about Karelia and the war, and the losses they experienced. I do not remember this being the case in our house, which is perhaps just to say that I personally do not remember, rather than that it did not happen. Later in the project, I thought that perhaps the feel of the house I lived in was so pregnant with Karelia that it did not have to be explicitly talked about. Starting with my grandma's thick Karelian dialect, which I did pay attention to at some stage, many things were self-evidently Karelian. Nonetheless, the fact that my grandmother was an evacuated war widow was something I understood only as an adult. Consequently, I felt I knew nothing of that side of her, and this made me phone her niece, and this is also what I told her about my focus for the interview. Indeed, in this atmosphere of returning to a part of my childhood again, I learnt things about my grandmother that I had not known before, some of which might have had to do with the effects of war and widowhood in her life. One of these concerned her skill at sewing, which raised questions about war and its chance effects, and I will return to this in the concluding section.

Her niece, my cousin, mentioned the wall rug in passing while she was praising my grandmother's handicraft skills. This was done in connection with talking about grandma's house. When she referred to the rug, I had a sudden flashback to the big

parlour in the house, and how my bed was in that room, under that wall rug. I remembered all sorts of details about that room. Later during the research, I have recognised that many of the objects that were brought back to my mind then, and repeatedly during writing the thesis, had to do with my grandma's Karelian past and wartime. I also remembered the big loom that was occasionally put up in the back room, and how some of the neighbours or village women would come to us to work with my grandmother. However, for some reason, I could not recall what the wall rug looked like. The pattern for it was called *The Holy Tree*, her niece said. I could not picture a tree in my mind, yet I could still feel in my hands how it felt to play with the fringe of the rug. I used to plait the threads in the evenings, and then invent stories with those braids, imagining how they were princes, princesses, the usual lot. I also recalled that I could not grasp what some of the figures in it meant. My relative remembered even the colours, but when she told me that the wall rug was brown, green and grey, that still left me feeling perplexed. In my mind there was this space on the wall in this familiar house, but I could not conjure up the picture of the rug into my head. The contours of the rug appeared to me without colours, as a kind of shimmering greyness in the dark of the night. The mental image of the wall rug above my bed, and the feel of the fringe in my hands was strong, but I had only a hazy sense of the details. I cannot quite explain why I was emotionally moved when I could not remember the design. Checking was not possible, since the original rug was destroyed in a fire. This launched a process of looking for the pattern, and this in turn developed into a kind of obligation to remember. These two aims were joined in an article that was written after a cultural studies personal writing summer school. In this first piece of writing on my research subject, I expressed this wish literally and grandly: if I could remember the wall rug, I would remember everything (Loipponen 2004). Such was my initial state of hubris, that there were no inverted commas around the word 'everything'.

At this stage, remembering the wall rug paralleled finding the form or structure for writing, to enable me to combine Karelian women talking about their lives from the viewpoint of their widowhood, and the story of my grandmother and my own memories. This was attached to trying to find the design for the Holy Tree wall rug,

and, to trying to remember the wall rug. These two goals seemed to have something in common: I could not remember grandma's wall rug and nor could I weave one, and I did not know how to write about a piece of research that had all the layers that I imagined mine would have. When I thought of these two separate areas of expertise, weaving and writing, I knew that, despite my lack of knowledge, both were solvable: rugs could be made and complex research issues could be unravelled. Out of this was born the idea of a 'text rug'. Through writing, I could bring forth the missing 'contents' of the wall rug, in a sense write it back from its oblivion, and simultaneously this missing central presence would become formed. Janina Baumann (2000, pp. 337–338) contributed to this goal by noting how writing an autobiography is about inventing or "even creating, a meaningful shape about one's own past", and then choosing the bits of memory that would fill this shape. For her, memories start to pour when the decision to remember is made. The idea of a 'meaningful shape' to my research was one I adopted from Baumann, though more in the manner of something to be worked towards. Consequently, my writing brought together clues I had gathered for understanding my subject and my research writing, though at that stage I did not yet dare to include much of the talk from the women I interviewed. These bits and pieces I literally wove together, using the signs from weaving patterns (/X/) as a template, with this concrete act being a means of specifying what I meant about the form of a text rug. This is where my process of 'memory weaving' also came closest to the usual way of weaving a rug by referring to it a graph (Middleton 1996, p. 20; Hännikäinen 1996, p. 59). Although I was not following a design, I was tracing one, and I shall weave in another part of the pattern in the next chapter.

Tracking down the actual wall rug design took several phone calls, contacts with different handicraft schools and shops, and asking everybody I met, including the women I interviewed. This also provided an opening for them to tell me about their interests, and it contributed towards a sense of interchange on many levels in the interviews (further discussed in 'Five Encounters', Chapter 4). Finally, I found a 'useful addresses' page in another wall rug book (Hännikäinen 1996) and on it the phone number for the Wall Rug Service [Ryjypalvelu]. This shop was run by the Women's Federation of War Invalids [Sotainvalidien Veljesliiton Naisjärjestö],

which made me hopeful (grandmother – war veterans – wall rug; at this stage of research everything that anything to do with war seemed of relevance).²⁴ And indeed, Marita Leivo on the phone told me there was a design called *The Holy Tree*, a 1940s design by Margareta Ahlstedt-Willandt, a well-known textile artist. She could send me a copy of the design, but only a clip of the work drawing since it was copyright material. Now that I was assured of obtaining the design, I was able to question the underlying feeling that I was “seeking for the wall rug in order to remember all”. Finding the design felt like a reassurance about writing, because the story I wanted to tell had a foundation. I had not doubted the existence of the wall rug, but I had to wait to see it in order to be able to really call it ‘my memory’.

Seldom had I waited more eagerly for the post, and I opened the letter with Proust’s Madeleine-effect in mind. Yet, seeing the wall rug did not return to me my childhood; instead I ‘remembered’ by seeing the figures that I had not grasped as a child and still could not quite understand the meaning of. When I wrote about this in an article (Loipponen 2004), I left out that I still felt baffled, however, and indeed I actually commented that “I see the wall rug and I remember it” (Loipponen 2005, p. 156). This was a slight exaggeration, or rather an expression of something that I felt right at the moment, even while knowing it was more complicated. But I was not disappointed, either. The drawing was cut diagonally into half, which meant that I could see only half of the central figure, the tree, and not very much of the weaving instructions. This felt appropriate: I was not at all clear about where I was heading at that stage, but I knew there was a lot of work ahead, and this half of a design that hid the whole seemed to symbolise that process.

After this initial encounter with the wall rug, it remained in my writing, but in an unspecified way. Eventually, in the process of thinking about the photographs, I brought the wall rug back to my thesis work in a more active manner. While drawing the storyboard, the photographs and other material I had in mind were grouped along vertical and horizontal lines, and from this emerged a sense of encounters as a basis

²⁴ The Wall Rug Service was established after the war by the War Invalids Federation. The profit went to the war invalids and their families. By the time that I phoned the company, it was privately owned.

for analysis. As a process and a constellation, this reminded me of my understanding of what a wall rug is. The warp on the loom is stretched longitudinally, the piles that consist of three to eight yarns are knotted each around two warp lines and the ground weft is woven in-between the knot rows (Middleton 1996, p. 20; Handiscola 2003). Here I am also referring to the mental activity of trying to understand what it means to tell, to remember and to forget, concerning both other people's memories and mine and the interconnectedness of these processes. Rich (1979, p. 187) resists simplification when comparing both the intricate weave-work of a carpet and truth as "increasing complexity".²⁵ I had started with the idea of a very specific wall rug that would be woven 'back from its oblivion'. Nevertheless, the text rug that was being produced in my thesis was a co-production, an increasing complexity, between the widows, the researcher and what this set of encounters meant in relation to the social world and our attempts to tell and to know it.

"Memory-work" is a concept initiated by Frigga Haug and colleagues (1999) [1983] as a method of collectively working on individually written memories, in order to gain knowledge of the socialization of women in becoming part of society, and how they themselves participate in that process. In this, memories of the past are fundamental. These memories are written down by the participating individuals, analysed together, and then further theorized by the "co-researchers", as the participants of the collective are named. The boundaries between 'subject' and 'object' are thereby problematized, since, "what interests us is the human potential for liberation, we conceived of human beings in collective and co-operative terms" (Haug 1999, p. 35). The method is firmly feminist social constructionist in breaking down the barriers between the subjects and the objects of research (Onyx and Small 2001). In my research, only the production of memories can be called co-operative,

²⁵ Rugs and carpets are often discussed together, since the technique for weaving is the same and age-old (for example, Middleton 1996). Rich (1979, p. 187) writes: "The pattern of the carpet is a surface. When we look closely, or when we become weavers, we learn of the tiny multiple threads that are unseen in the overall pattern, the knots on the underside of the carpet." Rich's carpet metaphor has also been used by Jo Spence (1986) in examining herself as the object for medical treatment on breast cancer. Stanley (1992, pp. 31–32) elaborates further Spence's usage of the metaphor in relation to her understanding of Spence's photographic iconography, and sees a counter-distinction there. The most appealing thing for me in Rich's approach is when she writes of when we look closely or when we become weavers. That is, both are ways of participation and thus means of production.

since the participants do not participate in the analysis of the written materials that result. It is also obvious that the women telling are the main producers of this and that they are in charge of what they are saying. The same applies for the biographies and pension applications I have also worked on, and of which I am the reader-receiver rather than a co-producer. However, by using the concept of ‘participatory memory work’, I stress the fact that the results are due to a meaningful encounter between two individuals who come to that meeting with such intention. Moreover, even when the talk is about individual memories, both the production and the analysis of these will carry traces of the surrounding social and interactional circumstances. The women I interviewed told their stories not only on the basis of what they have lived through, but also based on what they have learnt, read and heard. The same applies for the researcher, who also happens to be a granddaughter to a war widow, and a reading, writing and thinking person. This ‘granddaughter-position’ is not needed for research participation, but in my particular project it contributed both towards the subject-matter, and as a methodological device for participatory memory work.

In making these comments I draw on Ricoeur (2004, pp. 131–132), who widens the sphere of memory from the usual two poles, individual and collective, with an intermediate level of reference provided by people’s close relations. For these close relations, the person in question matters, they count for us and we count for them, including because there is the ‘viewpoint of shared memory’. Ricoeur situates close relations at varying distances in the relation between the self and others. Not only is there difference in the range of distances, but the intensity of this proximity keeps changing: some feel closer to each other, some stay at a distance, and in this context he draws on to Alfred Schütz’s ideas about the social world of contemporaries (Schütz 1972, p. 142) [1932]. For my research on war widows, I was interested in the idea that a researcher could become a kind of ‘occasional’ close relation (Loipponen 2006) to explain how, in a research situation, a researcher could choose and be accepted to participate actively in a processes of shared remembering and forgetting. According to Schütz (1972, pp. 163–164), these occasional close relations would fall into the category of fellow people: “I speak of another person as within reach of my

direct experience when he shares with me a community of space and a community of time”. This requires “Thou-orientation” in a face-to-face situation, “I become aware of a fellow human being as a person”, and this orientation can lead to a “We-relationship” if the interest is reciprocal (Schutz 1972, pp. 163–164). In a research situation, it is likely that a researcher is more Thou-oriented than the researchee, although both have to contribute to the common project and also both participate to a degree in each other’s lives, even if for a short time only. Of course, the researcher commitment continues past the immediate interview situation. In my research, the ‘granddaughter of a war widow’ position I think enabled at least moments of reciprocal exchange and interest. Through the concept of participatory memory work, I can think about what a We-relationship could mean and its consequences. In a project where some oral histories have been told ‘now’ and where various written histories told ‘before’ are also a part of it, this becomes a many-faceted process. It is not only the fellow people and contemporaries who are involved in experiencing social reality, but also, to continue with Schütz’s terminology, the predecessors and successors as well.

The wall rug as a metaphor for my doctoral research combines both images and text, but mostly it is a textual enterprise, a text rug. It ‘makes visible’ some scenes in fairly recent Finnish history, and as ‘new military history’ (Bourke 2006b, pp. 21–42; Kinnunen & Kivimäki 2006, pp. 15–17) is extending the coverage of war’s extensive landscape to include ‘ordinary people’ and their war experience as its subject (Kivimäki 2006, pp. 69, 85–86). One of the figures in my grandmother’s wall rug is an angel. I do not know how grandma perceived this, but when I look at the figure of the angel I think of Benjamin’s (1999, p. 249) angel of history, which for him was represented in Paul Klee’s painting *Angelus Novus*, for “this is how one pictures the angel of history”. Benjamin’s angel of history witnessed, unwillingly, wreckage of the past in the name of progress. Both Benjamin and my grandmother Alina Loipponen saw the same war emerging and destroying; she survived, he did not. Both of them also lived through the First World War, and my grandmother the Civil War of 1918 in Finland. In my work, the angel of history becomes the messenger

between the past as experienced and told and the present as the viewpoint for interpreting the research encounter in which this is told about.

Thought Zones

Around from my experience of an epiphanous break-through with thinking in relation to images and ‘image-scenes’, I have referred to arranging my research writing ‘more visually’. In practise, this means a mental array of ‘thought zones’ that are based on groups of photographs and other related material. In thinking this through, I want to describe the main ‘thought zones’ involved and discuss some key images that are important to me in explaining the connection to the written text.²⁶

The image-scenes I want to discuss here come from various sources and times, self-contained photographs, but which are linked together through my family history or through my narration. What is it, then, that I want to say through and about these pictures? First, they are not illustrations. That is, I do not regard them as evidence for interpreting the past, although they carry material traces of the past and feed into interpreting and imagining it (Haskell 1993, pp. 1–10). They are not props for my research either, but in a way their visuality speaks for itself. They have all accumulated along the way. Some belonged to my grandmother, some I have been given, and various of the later ones I have taken myself, but more as ‘souvenirs’ and not as research material. Not all of them are paper photographs: some are visual encounters in art exhibitions with the themes that are included in this study. However, all diversify and amplify my thinking and call for associative writing about lives that I had been told about. Timothy Dow Adams (1994, pp. 459, 483, 487) introduces the idea of ‘life writing’ and ‘light writing’, meaning autobiography and photography, and comments that both genres have in common the ability to conceal

²⁶ Another photograph by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, known as the ‘Artist and the Grave-digger’ (Stevenson 2002, p.29), has an important role in Chapter 3, ‘Narrative’s Long Exposure’. Hill, Adamson and their assistant Miss Mann took this photograph in Greyfriars graveyard in summer 1843. Greyfriars with its seventeenth-century carved tombs is located in the centre of Edinburgh and also the monument the photograph includes can still be found there.

and to reveal. Since my focus is on the individual, but not on what her ‘true’ story is or what is the truth of the photographs, this idea of concealment and display is interesting for me, too.

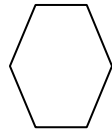
Tom Lubbock (2006, p. 30) writes of contemplating John Byam Shaw’s painting *The Boer War* (1901), examining both the image and the title together. In the painting, a woman, dressed in a long black velvet skirt, her hair in a bun, stands by a river. She seems to be deep in thought, a sign of which is that she has her little finger in her mouth. Nature around her has an abundant lushness in that moist spot, the picture is green, flowers blossom, birds fly. There is no war to be visibly seen anywhere in the picture. Lubbock comments though that the war is made present in the title, Britain’s imperial war in South Africa that started in 1899: “A lone woman stands by a stream at the bottom of a field or garden. She was the fiancée or wife or sister of a man killed in the war. She’s lately heard the news, and gone off on her own. Or she’s been in mourning some time, but the place – this is where they used to go, and never will again – calls out a sudden pang of memory and grief” (Lubbock 2006, p. 30). This interpretation has to be read into, indeed onto, the painting, which itself shows no sign of war. Indeed, this is what Lubbock sees as exactly the point of the picture. The word-image-juxtaposition invites the person looking at Byam Shaw’s painting to read things in, letting the scene and the title interact in the mind. This sense of distance between the oblique title and the classic pre-Raphaelite calm of the picture concerns the distance between war and peace, the scenic landscape of the English countryside and the South-African battle fields, the woman present in the picture and the man who was “absent far away and is now absolutely dead and gone” (Lubbock 2006, p. 30). This is a war scene, Lubbock reminds his readers, “For how do you show the Boer War except by depicting scenes from the war? And why shouldn’t these scenes include, not only battlefields and sieges, but also the scenes of bereavement and desolation that were the immediate consequence back home?” (Lubbock 2006). Furthermore, having to read the war into Shaw’s picture Lubbock suggests gives a rather contemporary feeling to the painting.

In the following thought zones to be discussed, war does not show up even in the title of these images. There are no 'real' war pictures among them, yet I have read war into them all. In other contexts than this research, they could be interpreted from a different viewpoint than the one I have provided here. Obviously, I can also have other things than war in mind when I look at the images, as well as it. One of them shows a beautiful summer's day and a group of seven young women are being photographed. I wonder if the child in front of them is my father. Or, in another one, my grandmother is in town with her girlfriends, and I wonder who is taking the picture. And this is the paradox of war, that most of what it causes it is not possible to show in any pictures. For how do you show sorrow? How do you show the social status of a widow? How do you show how that she has to have two or three jobs at the same time? How do you show that the children missed their father? How do you show what your grandmother felt when she signed her first contract to buy more forest for the farm that she had started and built up, after years of being evacuated and looking for a place to settle? The answer is that none of this can be made visible, but it can be better understood, and promoting this is the task of the interpreter, to help others to imagine and better understand what it is that war does, with its disruption, widowhood, losing a home. This task aided by the power of the images.

Even though these images come from different sources, when presented together they start to create an album effect of their own. This is a particularly rewarding outcome, because previously I have had only separate images of my family past. Dubravka Ugrešić (2000, p. 14) writes that there are two types of refugees, those with photographs and those who do not have them. In my study, the research story being told started to produce the family album that I had never had, as a granddaughter to an evacuee woman who had not taken her photo album with her when she escaped from war. It is likely that she did not own a family album, since she had had less than a year together with her husband. There is not one image of the three of them together – my grandmother, my grandfather, and their son – as a family. Of the over 400,000 people that fled, my grandmother was certainly not alone in not having a photo album of her family even in later life, after the basis for her life was so disrupted.

The following photographic thought zones are ones which are parallel and crossing in my mind, but this organic process is difficult to convey in a linear piece of writing about them. In order to show how the different ‘views’ are interconnected and work reciprocally as a part of a whole, these zones are connected with a hexagon or a kaleidoscope, a design introduced earlier in the Prologue.

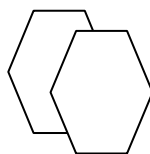
1



A photograph of seven young women, in front of them a baby boy. It is late summer, on the Karelian Isthmus. Two of the women are known to me, my grandmother and her sister. From them, I zoom in to look closely at the other five women and take the liberty of regarding them as the younger selves of my interviewees. Five women from the Karelian Isthmus, or, any five women who were photographed together but who had to flee, possibly who would never get together again, and who certainly would not return to this small meadow or backyard, since this place would be ceded to Russia in the war to come. This could be a photograph from the last summer of peace before the wars of 1939–1945 in Finland. What will happen to these women, because of war?

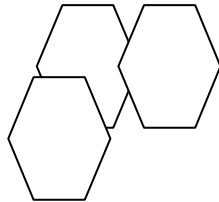
I photographed three of the women I interviewed, but I was so uncertain in the first two interviews that I did not dare to ask for their permission to take photographs. The absence of portraits of these two women has been a metaphor for something I shall return to later, the complexities of power in these research encounters. I associate this ‘gap’ with the photograph of the seven young women; similarly, I can only guess what has happened to these women and in parallel I can only claim fragmentary knowledge of the women I interviewed.

2



Two photographs of my grandmother, the first taken with her cousin in a photographer's atelier in Vyborg, and the second with two friends (one of them her future sister-in-law) in the market square in Vyborg. Probably they will have taken the train there from where they lived in the Karelian Isthmus. They are all very well dressed. Self-assured women, in a city full of movement. My attention is drawn to my grandmother's precision, to how her jacket is cut, how she holds her handbag. I have often looked at these photographs and wondered what happened to this stylish woman in later life. When I knew her, she was fond of very casual outfits. Her appearance in those early photographs was explained during the pilot interview I did with her niece, when she told me that grandma had been good at sewing and had worked professionally as a dressmaker. Later during a trip to Karelia, grandmother's nephew repeated this, and he remembered visiting her parlour as a young curious boy when there were women present trying on new dresses. He did not think that my grandma was meant for farming. All this made me ask about changes in people's lives when they live through a war.

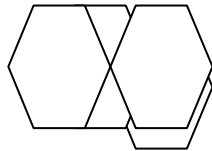
3



A portrait of the family of one of the women I interviewed and my family snapshots. One was taken at my Christening, and in the centre there are two older women wearing hats, the two grandmothers, surrounded by three generations of women, with no old men present at my Christening, only the young father, my father. Grandmother, mother, girls. There are no old men in my childhood photographs, since my mother's father died quite soon after the war. This was not regarded as due to war, but who knows. My mother wrote in her diary: "Isä [daddy] 19.3.1905. [Then she drew a cross.] 25.5.1951. He died when 46 years 2 months and 6 days old." She was twelve years of age, my father was ten months old when his father died, and I

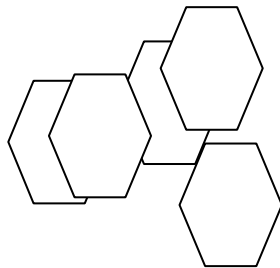
was twenty-four when my father died. He did not remember his father, I never had a grandfather, and my children never met their maternal grandfather. One war generated three consecutive generations of absent men, and for my generation perhaps a double absence, that of a grandfather and a father whose loss of a father had followed him. War too produces generations of women that raise their boys, and, for what?

4



A photograph of the widow Jenny Edström (1884–1966) in an interior, photographed by the Swedish photographer Sune Jonsson for his book *Byn det blaa huset* (Jonsson 1959; *The Village with the Blue Huse*, 2008). I have seen this photograph both in Jonsson's exhibitions and in his book. Jenny Edström stands in front of an open window, leaning over a flower she is pruning. Her wedding photograph is on the wall. I have been in these rooms and in these houses of women, all in perfect order. I remember every corner in both of my grandmothers' houses. What do I know of being a widow? What do I know of being alone after the day's work is done?

5



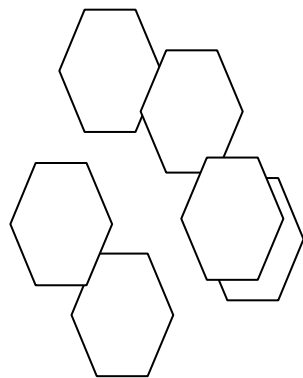
A set of interconnected images from the summers of 1939 and 2001. Their differences are around emptiness and fullness, death and life, peace and war, absence and presence, loss and the presence of what is not lost.

The photograph from summer 2001 was taken on the Karelian Isthmus. My grandmother's nephew showed me around the old family places. He walked down the road, past a curve where my grandfather's birthhome used to be, fifty-seven years

ago. This photograph was also published in a newspaper article I wrote after this trip (Loipponen 2001). It was published in the main Karelian newspaper in the country, and next to it was an old photograph of a road in the same village as it was before the war. Also, I was photographed in the same curve of the road by the nephew, which was very strange for somebody used to working as a journalist and being the one who photographs. I do not know how to express how I feel about the photograph. I see myself in this lost landscape that I am trying to write about and I see myself walking on that road of the village that could indeed have been a road very familiar to me.

The photograph from summer 1939 was taken on the steps of my great-grandparents' house. The house had just been painted, and my great-grandfather wanted pictures taken of his family in front of the house. My father's cousins stare straight into the camera. They are summer tanned with long legs, and new clothes will be needed for school. Another photograph from 2001, of the same cousin in the 1939 image, standing exactly in the same spot. He is the nephew to my grandmother who took me to Karelia in summer 2001 to see the 'old family village'. The placing on the steps is a coincidence, though, and I only notice it when back at home. In this picture, there is nothing else left of the scenery of the first image except for the steps where he stands, and even these are partly ruined. There is no house behind him in the picture taken in the summer 2001, and I have an odd sense that he might turn around and invite me to go with him into the scene of the first image, right behind it. The narrative of war becomes now.

6



The Islands is an art installation by Veli Granö (2004). I have seen it in three cities, Umeå (Sweden), Pori (Finland), and Newcastle (England). It is an installation which one 'walks in', as it takes up the space of an entire gallery room. A train pushes through a snowy landscape on a single railroad line and simultaneously makes a large circuit of the installation. In the centre of this 'never-ending' circle, there is a house which looks a bit like a shed but turns out to be a cinema, with deep purple velvet seats. There is a bridge for crossing the railway track to enter the cinema. Whilst in the cinema, one can see the same train online on a computer screen, with a camera recording the landscape and an occasional glimpse of a person that walks by. Simultaneously, a sound loop plays, and one can hear three stories told by elderly people about what they think of as very memorable moments. In one story, a cousin died in-between the wars out on the ice, when he got lost in the dark at evening. In another, a woman remembers how her hands got so cold when she was washing the laundry with her mother that she can still feel this coldness piercing her body and soul. And in the third story, a family escapes the bombing of Helsinki during the war.

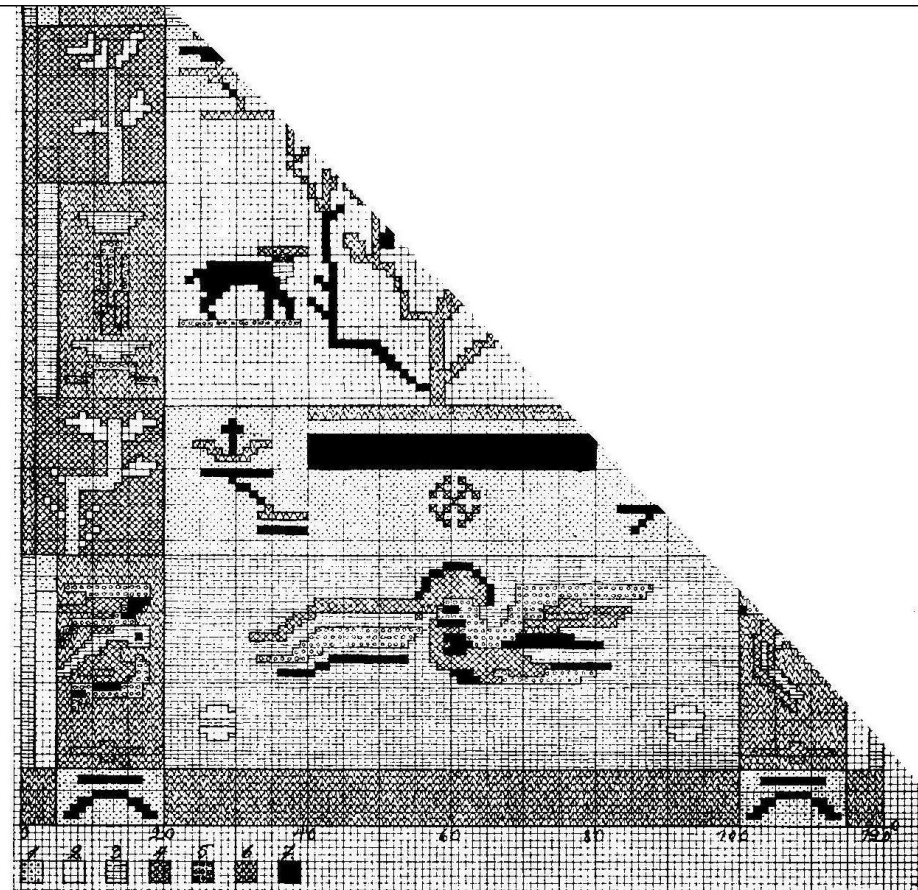
I sit inside the cinema and feel overwhelmed by the abundance of traces and links to follow, as I do in my thesis. I am writing about all of this, memory, time, space, war, death, life, work, body, soul, participation, remembering, forgetting, impressions, fact, fiction, the imaginary, the real, the first war winter, the second war winter and the winters of peace, and the memory that loops back and forth in time and is expressed now; and above all, about these people involved in this wheel of time, in history. I am so envious, too. How does the artist manage to get all this into the installation with such precision, when writing about it seems to be such a vast unwieldy task? What will my installation of memory and telling look like?

'Arrangements' describes perhaps best the period of structuring and restructuring my thoughts in my study. Eventually, with the help of this assembly of images and image-scenes, my research writing found its pulse. These concrete images insisted on

my writing about and around them, in which process I learnt to envisage them as belonging together, first as a storyboard for the research layout and then as image-scenes which allowed the researcher to be present and represented in the frame and in the story. Andrey Tarkovsky (1986, p. 119) writes that film editing means bringing out the inherent quality of time and rhythm in the frames that it joins. In *Stalker*, he wanted it to seem that the whole film had been made of one single shot, with the unity of time, space and action unbroken (Tarkovsky 1986, pp. 193–194). His aim with this kind of shooting and editing was to show how cinema, like prose, can “observe life, without interfering, crudely or obviously, with its continuity” (Tarkovsky 1986, p. 194). This approach was supported by him concentrating on his central idea for the film, the theme of human dignity and of what that dignity is (Tarkovski 1996, p. 198).

In my study, there are several different stories, times and spaces, but each ‘shot’ observes a person’s life longitudinally, according to the length of time that the narrated story covers. The inherent quality in each frame is continuity, despite wartime losses. Together these conjoined longer or shorter pieces form the thesis’s ‘long take’ on its research focus, which the title of Chapter 3 refers to as ‘Narrative’s long exposure’. Chapter 2 focuses on the main stages of the long period of fieldwork, which involved interviewing and then working in two archives. In Chapter 3, the main research materials are brought together and a narrative approach to thinking through the gathered material is introduced. Chapters 4 and 5 explore and analyse the research materials, concerning the interview research encounters and the archive encounters respectively. Chapter 6 discusses what I have learnt from the research process and ways in which my study contributes to understanding the surrounding society, which I regard as the supreme task of a piece of sociological and historical work. My study on war widows is located across rather than in-between history and sociology, and it says not only something about the past but also of the present.

Image 1. Grandma's wall rug



Sommitteflut
Komponerad av M. AHLSTEDT-VILLANDT

O.Y. NEOVIUS A.B.
Helsinki — Helsingfors

RYIJY N:o 50 »PYHÄ PUU»

Valmiina n 110x150 cm. Käsideleveys 120 cm.

Käde n:o 20. 1 ruutu = 1 nukka = 1 nukkarivi = 2 loimilankaa. Nukassa 4 lankaa. Nukan pituus valmiina 16 mm.

Tämä työpiirustus oikeuttaa valmistamaan yhden ryijyn. Työpiirustusta ei saa jäljentää eikä antaa lainaksi. Työpiirustuksen vuokra mk. Työpiirustuksen saa pitää 2 kuukautta. ~~Vuokra-ajan jälkeen vuokra 2 kuukaudelta.~~

Työpiirustus on palautettava työn valmistuttua.

RYAN N:o 50 »DET HELIGA TRÄDET»

Som färdig ca 110x150 cm. Bredd i vävskeden 120 cm.

Vävsked n:o 20. 1 ruta = 1 nock = 1 nockrad = 2 ränningstrådar. I nocken 4 trådar. Nockens längd som färdig 16 mm.

Denna ritning berättigar till förfärdigande av en rya. Arbetsritningen får icke kopieras eller utlånas. Arbetsritningens hyra mk. Ritningen får behållas 2 månader. ~~För övertid berättigas 2 hyra per månad.~~

Ritningen bör returneras så snart arbetet föreligger färdigt.

Chapter 2. Gathering Material In Stages

Introduction

Gathering my main research materials involved a process which took place in three stages. Correspondingly, my analysis of both the process and its results is an account of both processes and ‘findings’. This choice of a processual approach places the notion of ‘experience’ in the centre of the thesis, so long as experience is understood as the accumulation of meaning, and knowledge is regarded based on experience (Stanley and Wise 1993, p. 293). That is, experience is not treated here as though transparent ‘evidence’ of how it was, since experience is just one version, a personal and individual view on what happened (Personal Narratives Group 1989, p. 261). And also an importantly, in my research people are telling about this, and doing so for context specific reasons.

My view of the research experience as reflexive encounters concerns the researched women telling about their own experiences, as well as the researcher producing an “intellectual auto/biography”, thereby providing “accountable knowledge”, with an analytic and reflexive focus on the specifics of “how we come to understand what we do” and of locating and explicating these “acts of understanding” for the readers (Stanley 1990, p. 62; Stanley 1991, p. 209; Cotterill and Letherby 1993, p. 74; Letherby 2002, para. 5.1–5.9; Temple 2005, p. 5.3). And this is so regarding my archival research too. This processual understanding of experience and research takes into account how historical and social processes position subjects and impact on their tellings of their experiences, understandings and the oral, visual and other texts they draw on for this; and the politics of this knowledge construction process are also examined here (Scott 1992, p. 24–26; Smith 1990b, pp. 3–4).

This chapter addresses the methodological basis for my thesis, including the reasons for my interviewing war widows who were also war refugees, and this is intertwined with the reasons why I limited the number of my main interviewees to five.

Alongside this, the work I carried out with the archival material in the Finnish Literature Society's Folklore Archives and in the State Treasury are also explored. These 'setting the research scene' accounts provide an entry and context for the analysis of war widows' stories which follows later.

Exiles

The reason I wanted to concentrate on war widows who came from Karelia was complex and included that this added the possibility of bringing into the research the themes of flight from home and, consequently, exile. In the particular case of Karelians, exile meant becoming a refugee in one's own country, since the Finns from the ceded area were transferred to other areas of Finland. Having to leave home and settle somewhere else was already a particular interest of mine, in the sense that it has been something that I have tried to explore through different types of writing, including journalism and fiction. Thinking about this in terms of these women being refugees linked my research with discussions and theorisations of exile and forced migration in general, instead of looking solely in terms of the local Finnish discussion around Karelia, which to my mind could benefit from the sense of a wider context. Over 400,000 thousand people left their homes and their family lands, occupations and social activities, yet there has been a tendency to turn this into a question of 'Karelian longing', with this longing being seen as excessive, because of the descriptions which circulated of a wonderful paradise-like land that was lost, and then later because some people actively claimed their land back. This attitude perplexed me. I could be biased, since I come from a half-Karelian family, but I still think that there is a story to tell to the rest of Europe, of a massive forced migration of people that was and still is an all too common European phenomenon (as is the case elsewhere in the world, of course). Consequently, in the research encounters I had when interviewing the war widows, I was interested to hear the version of what happened and its consequences as this was told by the people who had been compelled to take to the road and move to a place which was entirely new to them.

In Finnish debates about exile, the emphasis has typically been on descriptions of the life of the evacuees and comparing these Karelians with the local Finns living in the places they were evacuated to. In these studies, Karelian ways of preparing food, eating, cleaning, heating up the oven, visiting, talking, laughing, bringing gifts to a newborn baby, have been examined. In general, everything which is seen as linked to ‘adaptation’ and ‘assimilation’ has been of interest, and the result has always been that ‘they’ – the Karelians and their manners – differ in major ways from how people are and things are done in the places they moved to (Sallinen-Gimpl 1987, 1994). There has also been research on the extent to which the resettlement has succeeded (Waris, Jyrkilä, Raitasuo & Siipi 1952; Paukkunen 1989), and how Karelia is reminisced about (Raninen-Siiskonen 1999). Less attention has been paid to considering these two mass evacuations of Karelians as part of other wartime and ongoing transfers of people all across Europe occurring for a variety of reasons, and, consequently, little attention to the larger philosophical issues that concern loss, departure, settlement, and a sense of belonging. These issues are not thoroughly covered in this research either, because this would be the subject for another and rather different research project from the one I am carrying out. However, the starting point for my looking at Karelians lies precisely in relating this to the context of European migration movements generally, although naturally the local context impacts on the particularities of people’s experiences of this.

My thinking about the Karelian evacuations in the context of European forced migrations more broadly was shaped because of a large Berlin exhibition in 2006 that concentrated on the 80–100 million migrants that Europe has had on the move during the last century. In this exhibition, *Erzwungene Wege – Flucht und Vertreibung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* [Forced Paths – Flight and Expulsion in Europe During the 20th Century], Karelians were presented as “torn between Stalin, Hitler and their own government, similarly to the Baltic people, Greek and Turkish Cypriots in their respective countries”, among the over thirty other nations and national groups that have lost their native land (Zekri 2006). This exhibition made news in Finland, and Ahtiainen (2006, p. C 4) interviewed different Karelia experts and organizations about the exhibition, with all of those interviewed stating that it was unexceptional

that attention should be given to the Karelian experience along with other peoples. To my mind, the journalist should have inquired why Finnish researchers had not made a comparable exhibition of the flight of the Karelians in relation to that of other war-torn nations. Kemiläinen (2006, p. 14) suggests that there are mistakes in research concerning Finland's participation in WWII and believes that these have caused unjustified damage to Finland's reputation, because it has not been understood that Finland did not start the war and was using Nazi Germany to succeed in Finland's separate war rather than fighting Germany's war. Some of Kemiläinen's observations concern Karelia and Karelian refugees, for example, she quotes Hugh Seton-Watson (1977, pp. 268–269) writing that the Karelians were expelled as a consequence of Finnish aggression against their neighbours, unlike the Palestinians, who had been peaceful residents in their own country before the Israeli invasion drove them from their homes (Kemiläinen 2006, pp. 6–7). However, as Kemiläinen (2006, p. 7) points out, the Karelians were peaceful residents of the Finnish state before the Soviet attack started the war in 1939. Kemiläinen's article was published in Finnish and thus had limited effect, while in reaching the attention of a wider audience, the Berlin exhibition made clear the fact that Finland paid dearly for the war, with the evacuation of Karelia a previously unknown event for the curator who was responsible for that part of the exhibition (Ahtiainen 2006, p. C 4).

There were also agitated voices raised around the Berlin exhibition. In particular, Poland protested against showing that over fourteen million Germans were expelled from their native places in Poland in the aftermath of the war, because this was presented together with the deeds of the Nazi regime (Ahtiainen 2006, p. C 4). There is a valid point here about not using the same heading to include very different cases, but if the focus in the exhibition was on the individual experience of flight, then the Germans who left their homes might justifiably qualify. If not, then, including the Karelians in this exhibition could also be objected to, since Finland did seek Germany's support, a fact which cannot be denied, regardless of whatever sensible reasons existed at the time that it was thought of as appropriate tactics. Finland fighting its separate war has also been referred to as "the fiction" (Kirby 2006, pp. 222–224). In the name of politics, the individual people involved should be easily

brushed off the pages of history, and indeed the Karelians²⁷ as well as the expelled Germans²⁸ for a long time were not talked about in public debate and had been made to vanish.

At the same time as *Erzwungene Wege* was held in Berlin, another exhibition was put on concerning different types of European migration over the last ten centuries, whether due to war, occupation, better salaries, higher living standards or political reasons. It was called *Everybody is a stranger somewhere* and this travelling exhibition presented themes reflecting the problems of being a stranger.²⁹ My path coincided with this exhibition in December 2006 in Riga (Latvia), where I had travelled mainly to trace the landscape of flight written about by Vieda Skultans, who interviewed people who fled Latvia under Soviet rule (Skultans 1998, 1999, 2004). Skultans (1999, p. 170) refers to “textual communities” as the basis for her knowledge of Latvia, because she herself left when young and has since learnt of the country mainly through oral and written narratives. Perhaps I was oversensitive because of my years of working with the questions of exile, and also by Skultans’ idea of learning through others about something that you have no memories of your own. However, when I learnt about the exhibition whilst in Riga, I felt that many strands of what I had been working on came together, the crossing of paths, not just those of my own research journey but also of the journeys of those I had travelled with, both mentally and concretely. My grandmother, amongst those more than 400,000 Karelians, had fled from her home in February 1940 and then again in June 1944, and the same applied to the women I interviewed. The Skultans family fled Latvia late in autumn 1944 and it took them three and half years on the road before they finally arrived in England in January 1949. My grandmother moved, after some

²⁷ In Finland, the consequences of war were not discussed during the Cold War era, because of the cautious politics that followed the war. Later this has been called “Finlandization” (originally *Finlandisierung*, by Löwenthal (1966); see Salminen (1996, 1998).

²⁸ Ahtiainen (2006, p. C 4) interviewed a former East-German man who fled Sudetenland when he was seventeen. There were 3.2 million Germans in this area which is now the Czech Republic. And 200,000 of those Germans were killed in the expulsion. The interviewee wanted to have even more information on the Germans that left, since “These matters were long silenced, at least in the former DDR”.

²⁹ This exhibition was initiated in 2003 by Haus der Geschichte of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn [Museum of Contemporary History] in cooperation with eight European partner museums (Haus der Geschichte 2003).

years of lodging in other people's homes, to the place that became her permanent home in 1948. She started building up from a scratch what was essentially just a piece of land in the middle of forest, with her first house, a two-room log house, while, a year before I was born, in 1963, she had a bigger house built. The women I interviewed had also moved several times, but in the end all of them had houses built for them and some of them started a farm from previously uncultivated land.

The research I have done concerning all these women, and migrations has taken me to Karelia, to England and Scotland, to Riga, and it has made me realize that exile has long traces and that a community of exile exists which includes those who share the experience of forced transition. This sense was fortified by my encounter with the two exhibitions just referred to and also some other art exhibitions on the theme of expulsion and flight which I saw. During the research period, not unexpectedly with all the political unrest in Europe, my gaze was also turned generally towards the question of being a refugee. In this context, the Karelians had their rightful place, even if it was a politically unfortunate one. I had written about the loss of Karelia in the same war in which Latvia had lost its independence and become a part of the Soviet Union until 1991, and before I did so I had travelled in the former USSR, and thus managed in this small way to experience the Soviet period there. The later trip to Riga represented a kind of circular movement 'back' to what the era of occupation had done, and then, what the new phase of restored independence had added up to. All the time I had in mind that Finland had struggled to avoid occupation. In consequence, with all these strands being pulled together in Riga, I experienced being in the middle of a continent of transit and with my own research highlighting just one aspect of this from one viewpoint: "The permanent influx of new population groups, people leaving their old homeland to find a new one – this has been a continuous process in Europe for centuries. It is especially this diversity to which the European continent owes its distinct profile" (Haus der Geschichte 2003). I have not ever been exiled, but through my work I belong to Skultán's 'textual community' of those who share texts and thoughts on what it means to have to leave. However, I am not so convinced that I would agree with the idea that, "as a consequence, what used to be 'strange' is often considered a matter of course today", for it is doubtful that the

urgency of questions about trying to become a part of somewhere new have diminished because of the quantity or quality of migration (Webster 1998, pp. 40–44). From this perspective, my work is directed towards ‘otherness’ and to how to represent a community, such as the Karelians, which is constantly being formulated as ‘them’ even though originally and all the time ‘they’ are also ‘us’. In doing this, I am not concerned with ‘opinions’ produced by Karelians and people who are not, but rather with the telling of loss and in this connection interrogating my own ‘Karelia-orientalism’ in relation to the women I interviewed and also the other material I gathered for this study (this term ‘Karelia-orientalism’ will be discussed in ‘Reciprocal Gifts’, the concluding section to Chapter 4, ‘Five Encounters’).

Five Karelian Women

Why, then, did I interview just five women? Obviously, there are many more war widow stories that could be told than this. I did not select the ‘best’ ones. These five women are the ones that I interviewed, besides the pre-interviews I also carried out. The very basic explanation of why five interviews is that this research has as its point of departure the intention of focusing on the experiences of individuals in war and ‘after’. For this reason, the number of interviewees needed to be a small number, so that what they told could be explored in depth. Five names of five women can be learnt by heart and they can be followed as individuals throughout what I write about the research, and they are Bertta Kaukinen, Kyllikki Iloranta, Sylvi Ahola, Helmi Parikka and Eeva-Liisa Rötö. Having more interviews would not have added to my understanding of what happens when a person loses nearly everything that they have held dear to them and then they have to continue, to just go on, in the changed circumstances. Concentrating on the experiences of a small number of individuals occurred for two further reasons as well. The first is a practical one, concerning the organisation of research, and the second is an intellectual one concerning, how loss was defined in my particular research context.

As a general observation about interview-based research, an abundance of interview material often leads to a strong sense that the interview excerpts are being used just

as ‘illustrations’ for the text, so that a particular life of a particular person that has been the basis for the one-to-one research encounter of the interview itself is muffled, if not altogether lost. In such cases, it is difficult to integrate the interview quotes used, and they are typically fragments of speech glued to the text body to explain the researcher’s ideas and arguments. What was probably supposed to be a vivid and eloquent coverage using a variety of voices, all too often becomes a bland mixture because the interview excerpts lose their context of telling. My concern was to carry with me the voices and tellings of those individual war widows who participated in my research. With just five, it seemed possible to familiarize readers with the ‘characters’ and to weave each individual story across all the discussion.

However, there were also contradictory factors which worried me about the number of women I interviewed. I was conscious of the high average age of the war widows, who had not been the subject of a scientific study before. In Finland, widows from the Second World War have been interviewed for three life story collections (Salmi 1986; Westerholm 2001; Himanka 2004), but not for an academic research project. Furthermore, at the beginning of my research, finding some people to interview proceeded slowly. To solve this practical problem, and perhaps also because of my self-assumed duty ‘to save voices’ in greater numbers (I shall return to this issue), I decided to place a notice about my research in a newspaper. The title of this concerned war widows that had come as evacuees from Karelia and was published in a newspaper oriented towards the Karelian community of the country.³⁰ This same text, with a small change of title, was also used for leaflets that were delivered to different Karelian clubs in Lahti,³¹ with the result that I made two pilot interviews based on contacts gathered from different clubs. Later these handouts were also used in Northern Sweden (where I was partly living at that time), and I also had some contacts with a local Lahti widow’s association.³²

³⁰ This is *Karjala* [Karelia], 12.4.2001, published once a week.

³¹ There is an abundance of Karelian clubs all over the country. Many of these are still very active. They are mostly organised according to the place of origin for the members, but can also be thematic, such as the ‘Karelian Story Club’ in Lahti.

³² My contacts with the local Lahti War Widow’s Association proceeded slowly, but in the end I was given a name list of possible interviewees. Later a short appeal was published in the national journal for war widows (Loipponen 2004). The emphasis there was on collecting

This public appeal was a conscious risk for me, because if contacts from the ‘field’ were high then I had to be prepared to reconsider my conviction about doing a small-scale project and to possibly include more interviews. However, even though there were contact calls and letters, the number of these was moderate and anyway some of those who got in touch wanted to talk about their mother as a war widow or of some other issue, rather than themselves being war widows. After consideration, I decided to keep the amount of interviews to the women I was already involved with, but I left open the option to interview more people. Staying with five as the number was also considerably influenced by how I perceived the concept of loss. As I explained earlier, the decision was reached that I would concentrate the research on ‘what is made of loss’, and my aim was to talk to the widows about how they managed in their new surroundings after the losses they had experienced. In this light, I was concerned that accumulating more interviews would shift the focus onto the quantity of the material and possibly lead to a sense of these life histories as a ‘collection of misfortune’, rather than tellings of loss within a life. This was because generally I resisted seeing people who had experienced loss in their lives as sharing qualities that underscored them as ‘victims’ or as members of a ‘minority’. I was concerned that those kinds of labels could be attached to a research group which was comprised of ‘evacuees’, ‘widows’ and ‘lonely women’, all of which are stereotypically seen as on the ‘margins’ of society. This would once again prevent them from being heard as producers of history that had not been made public before. The women I interviewed were asked to tell their account of how it was to live through the years during and also after the war, because that version of history was missing, and this made them in my eyes a valuable source of information, as a group of people who should be asked questions about the past. Each of them, however, is as an individual with a story to tell, and ought not to be treated as a ‘representative of loss’. Joy Damousi (2001, p. 1) stresses in her research on Australian war widows that she does not consider war widows “primarily as welfare recipients – as others have done”. I share her view that

letters and diaries, from other people as well as the Karelian evacuees. At the same time, I had started with work on widows’ written life stories. I had been in touch with the War Widow’s Association in the beginning of the research, too, but finally the new executive director, Pirjo Pekonen, took an interest in my work and sent me the material that was available there.

war widows have other stories to tell than their means of support, for they have contributed to the national history of any country that has been to war. Damousi's (2001, p. 8) intention is to correct the absence of war widows in Australian history, having produced two books on the subject (see Damousi 1999, 2001). My own research is the first academic attempt to fill a similar gap in Finnish war history. More and more attention is being paid to women in war and peace both in Finland and elsewhere, with examples of such studies referred to at relevant points in my thesis.

However, despite my worries about how people seen as 'weak' are marked with a stamp of victimhood, I did not ever contemplate omitting any 'unhappy' stories in favour of those with a happy end. I was open to whatever version of their lives that the women I interviewed wanted to tell, but in practise it did not take long for me to realize that I might have influenced the kind of stories that people might tell me because of the public notice in the newspaper. That is, the widows were approached with a request to 'tell of their survival', instead of 'telling of their losses'. I stated at the beginning of the newspaper notice that I was doing research on the survival of evacuated Karelian war widows in their new surroundings after the war, and its working title was also cited in the announcement, "The Post-War Survival Stories of Evacuated Karelian War Widows". This happened early in the research process and I was not fully aware of everything that was hinted at by the wording I had chosen. The title was formulated as it was because my goal was not to dwell on mishap but the telling a life more fully. The title was also formulated to highlight appreciation for the work and 'survival' of such women despite the hard conditions they were subjected to. Nonetheless, it is possible that the phrasing favoured those who felt that they 'managed', and discouraged those who would have told another kind of a story.

I did not want to position the war widows as representatives of loss, but nor was I looking for a 'model experience' of coping. However, I had not defined the meaning that I was giving to 'survival'. I did not regard war widows as 'victims', but I did not see them as 'heroes', so how did I see their loss? For me, 'survival' was a woman's practical attitude of dealing with what comes in their life, and my use of 'survival'

was meant in the sense of ‘carrying on’. However, this everyday ‘to bear with the circumstances and live on’ intention of mine was not appreciated because of the special meaning that ‘survival stories’ now have as a concept, and this was something that I did not at first understand. Leaving aside here that survival stories can be used to refer to the accounts that helped the war generation comprehend their memories of war, I want instead to think about the notion of ‘women’s survival stories’ and its influence on my thinking.

At least in the Finnish context, attaching the term ‘survival stories’ to women coping in various hardship situations has aroused annoyance, since ‘survival’ is often simply managing, and the only available option. When I was confronted with this in an article that dealt with women’s wartime experiences (Peltonen 1993, pp. 67–70), my first reaction was to object to interpreting ‘survival’ as a category of heroism. No better word was available to describe how the war widows in my research must have steadily worked towards improving the quality of their lives. Peltonen (1997, pp. 131–132) also returns to the same issue, when a new light was thrown on her own earlier assumptions about how the war was ‘glorified’ by her informants by younger women who wrote for the same research report that she did about women and wartime (Raitis 1993). Particularly revealing of the generational differences in thinking about the war was a younger male student who wrote an unpublished course essay, based on interviewing some of Peltonen’s earlier informants; he interpreted their stories more as descriptions of the everyday of war, and his interpretation showed Peltonen that the interviewees were able to reflect on their own views (Peltonen 1997, pp. 131–132). Peltonen wonders if there might be a difference between her own generation and those which did not experience war even as a subject for discussion at home. For my own part, with regard to the idea of ‘survival story’ I did not have such doubts. Nonetheless, I had to question why I had named what I was collecting as survival stories. I could have just written that I do research on the lives of evacuated Karelian women in their new surroundings after the war, for instance. For what reason, then, had I chosen to emphasize the interpretation of these as survival? As well as ‘women’s survival stories’, I concluded that another

influence on me had been the myth of the ‘strong Finnish woman’,³³ and here Pirjo Markkola (2002, p. 86) asks if female researchers of Finnish history or contemporary culture are “doomed to repeat the mythic image of the strong Finnish woman”.³⁴ I shall discuss this again later, but here I think was to an extent influenced by mythic ideas about women’s strength (Stark-Arola 1998, p. 52; Apo 1998, pp. 75–84), which shows in the wording of my newspaper notice. In everyday terms, I do not now remember if I had an alternative to thinking like this, because the only model for war widows I had were my two grandmothers, who had been in charge of running their own farms, raising nine children, buying more forest, being socially respected in their communities as, for example, the chairwoman of the local Martha organization.³⁵ Furthermore, my own background was also in the countryside and some of these structures for thought and action were inherited from the agrarian society and shared by other Finnish women whose roots are in the countryside. According to this legacy of agrarian femininity, it is self-evident that women work and earn their own living (Apo 1999, p. 23), while wartime has further contributed to this general sense of women managing basically any task (Satka 1993, p. 64), which obviously was the model which my mother and my father had received from their widowed mothers and which they passed on to me, since I do not recall ever hearing sentences such as ‘a woman can’t do that’. On a conceptual level, certainly I should have paid attention to such things before I formulated the announcement about my research (Apo 1998, pp. 342–343). But as a result of my eventual insight, the idea of ‘survival stories’ was at least something I problematized as a concept before I started actually interviewing, and thus I could mull over the suitability of this description together with the women I interviewed themselves

³³ The concept of ‘strong Finnish woman’ has been debated, for example, in many issues of the *Naistutkimus – Kvinnoforskning* [Women’s Studies] journal; see Koivunen 1998, Peltonen 1998.

³⁴ Markkola (2002, p. 85) also points out that descriptions of women’s strength and strength as a national quality are by no means only the property of Finns.

³⁵ The Martha organization is a national Finnish home economics body that also carries out cultural and civic education.

Proceeding to the Archives: Karelian Life Stories

Interviewing war widows was the practical starting point for conducting my research, but even in the first public call I made to seek participants I had also expressed a wish also to be sent letters and diaries. My interest in written research material increased while the research proceeded, particularly when my curiosity was aroused about the period after the war years, when I became aware that the ‘moment’ of interviewing involved a sixty year delay between ‘now’ and the original ‘when’, although I am sure that this curiosity was also spiced with an interest in the ‘personal’, with that which might be left out of what was told in the interviews. In the pre-interviews carried out, these people had themselves produced some written material, and letters and diaries were discussed in the main interviews, too. The fate of people’s letters could indeed be an integral part of the dialogue I had with them (see later, for example, the interview with Eeva-Liisa Rötökö), but talking and photographs remained the main sources of information. I was also sent by post and e-mail some written biographical accounts and some books, although these were not about war widows. After a later announcement about my research appeared in a journal about war widows, *Huoltoviesti* (Loipponen 2004), a small number of war-time letters were sent to me.

From the beginning, I was interested in archived material as what was told in interviews, and because of this I approached several institutions and individuals about access to such sources. Firstly, I got in touch with the Karelian League, which is the main organization of Karelians in Finland and was established in 1940 to promote and protect the collective interests of Karelian evacuees (Teperi 1993). This organization had completed collecting biographies of Karelian women a couple of years earlier, and they welcomed my reading them. Secondly, I was also informed about the Helsinki University Folklore department project ‘From Karelians to Evacuated Karelians’, which involved interviewing Karelians and recording these interviews on video. However, it turned out that they were still in process of establishing how best to use their material and I could not access it. The third possible source for material relevant for my research was the Folklore archives of the

Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki. Here I was told about a collection of Karelian biographies and was advised that some Karelian material was also included in collections such as *A Day in a Life of a Finn* (1999) and *War-time in Our Memories* (2001). However, since I had started with the interviews and was immersed in the world of the women I interviewed, the possibility of including archive material in my research remained in the background.

Finally, when I started to gather more material, this was not more personal material, but was to explore the emerging structural and reflexive questions concerning the whole project that were arising. The key ideas of researcher participation and memory work could be explored in the data I already had, but I also wanted to include material that was produced in different time for an altogether different reason than a purpose-sought interview. This feeling was intensified once I realized how much I had possibly ‘influenced’ in advance the women who were interviewed, through my choice of the title for the research. I was not ‘naïve’ about the interviews; I knew from experience, including my work as a journalist, that the people being interviewed would choose what they wanted to say. However, this could still have been influenced by the wording of the announcement. For these reasons, I got back in touch with the Folklore Archives. By this time, the Karelian League collection of Karelian women life stories had also been transferred there, so that this archive now had three major collections of Karelian life stories stored there. The Literature Society collection campaigns often originated as ‘writing contests’, which means that people are asked to write about phenomena in their everyday life; there is a jury and prizes, and in many cases a book is also published. In addition, all the material is preserved for the purposes of future research and this is told to the participants right at the start. In addition, the Literature Society uses other ways of collecting material, including oral interviews, video-taping and so on.³⁶

For my research, I decided to explore two of the Karelian collections on women’s life writing. This material has been only partly catalogued, but using keywords, and

³⁶ The Literature Archive ongoing collections range from subjects such as ‘The Fear of Darkness’ to ‘Religion in the Everyday Life of Karelian Women’. See The Folklore Archive <http://www.finlit.fi/english/kra/index.htm>.

one of the keywords used was 'leski' (widow). Consequently, I had a pre-listed keyword search carried out by a researcher who had already worked in the manuscript collections. What resulted consisted of a hundred names, from actually three collections, one of them a collection of *Life Stories of Karelian Men* (2001–2002) which I did not include in my study. One of the other two collections was the 1983–1984 *Karelian Life Stories* collection, which was also produced by the Karelian League. This collection is vast: it has 793 respondents and 22,784 pages of written material, plus tapes and photographs. The other collection is the continuation of this one, again produced by the Karelian League in 1997–1998, but this time concentrating on the *Life Stories of Karelian Women*.

The pre-selection I had done was in random order. If I had followed this, it would have made my practical work extremely difficult because the collections were not stored next to each other but in different parts of the Archive. Instead, I decided to follow a chronological order and began with the cardboard files of the first collection. However, it soon became clear that the list and the actual contents of the folders did not always match. The keyword 'leski' could point to just a small part of a story in which there was only one mention of a widow in a subordinate clause; but, since the keyword search did not direct me to specific parts of an account, all the stories had to be checked through. In fact, the list was soon abandoned and I started to go through the files systematically. This was my first time working in an archive, and I was overwhelmed by the quantity of material even though I had been told in advance about the size of this particular collection.

As a novice to working on large archival data sources, I also lacked the discipline which comes from experience and I could not resist reading things in addition to the war widow texts. In particular, the descriptions of how families had to leave their homes I found intense and gripping. For example, Aino Koppi wrote how, on 13 March 1940, a group of women went for a walk to a neighbour's house (Koppi 1984, pp. 7686–7689). They felt restless, they listened to the news, and everybody thought that the war might end and they could just return home and they took the walk to calm their nerves. When they got to their neighbour (a relative, as usual, since

Karelian villages consisted of close families and relatives), they were surprised to see smoke rising from the chimney. The house was isolated and they thought that something had happened to the women of the house, because it was war and it was forbidden to light a fire in the middle of the day. When the visitors opened the door, they noticed that it was entirely the other way around from what they had feared: everybody was happy and laughing about how the war had ended. The matron of the house started hugging them and kept saying “peace, peace”, and that her husband would now be able to return since he had not died in the war (Koppi 1984, p. 7688). They had ‘coffee for peace’ (‘juotiin rauhankahvit’; an obligatory sign of any success in the country is drinking coffee together) and the neighbour even opened some parcels containing her best handwork that she had intended to take with her if she was evacuated. The mothers in the village with young children had all been sent away, as well as people over sixty years of age, and these younger women had stayed behind to take care of the cattle but were ready to leave if necessary.

The girls were jubilant when they left, because now there was peace and their lives would return to normal. However, when they got back home, where their father had remained, they saw that the yard was full of lingon berries and they found him by the kitchen table weeping. “Why”, they asked, “it is PEACE now” (Koppi 1984, p. 7689). However, he had listened to the whole radio broadcast and had heard what the terms were that concerned the annexation of Karelia. The girls knew nothing about these terms, because the neighbour had turned off the radio as soon as they heard the word ‘peace’, in order not to consume more of the batteries. So there was no returning to normal, but instead preparation for the evacuation started right away, because they were ordered to leave the following day.

I have included this excerpt from a story that is forty-seven pages long (Koppi 1984, pp. 7675–7722) to show that it would have been difficult for any researcher just to ignore this account, no matter what one was after in the archive; at least, I could do nothing but read it. I also wanted to read more on how people had experienced the war. In my own interviews, the focus was on moving forward in the story and the little details I was most interested in were in proportionately less in what I was told.

Furthermore, the pace of them telling me these things was fast, and I noticed afterwards some things that I should have checked while the interviews were happening. Consequently, there were knowledge gaps I needed to have filled after I had begun analyzing the interviews. These might be very detailed questions, such as the exact day of the week when the war began, which was needed to be able to understand how people's weekly routine was broken because of the war. At that time, and for a long time afterwards, Finland was a mostly agricultural society with strict daily, weekly, monthly and yearly cycles, and I wanted to examine how this was affected by the violent intrusion of war. Reading the written archival material, it was possible to fill in what was missing. Nonetheless, this forty-seven-page narrative was not a war widow story.

Despite the large quantity of life stories I had access to, war widow accounts were not in abundance among this material, especially not as first person accounts. By page 7627 of my reading, I had managed to find one war widow story, told by the relative of a family who lost the father during the first summer of the war. There were eight children, the youngest one only a year old, and the information about this death was received on the same day that the Winter War ended. Suddenly this family was without a father and also without a permanent home, having been evacuated. This was a moving story of 36 pages, but on the last page there was a note saying that publishing the story was forbidden, because the relative who had written it thought that permission should be directly requested of the now adult children. From the way the note was worded, I could not be sure if the author meant referencing the story as well, and so I have changed some of the details and also omitted the rest of the story.

At this stage, instead of continuing until I found a war widow story, I decided to move on to explore the next collection. The 1997–1998 Karelian Women's Life Stories collection consists of stories written by 236 people (209 women, 27 men), adding up to almost 6,000 pages of text. My guess that there would be a shift of emphasis between the two collections was wrong. War, evacuation, work, home, being Karelian: such themes were repeated from the first collection. In this respect,

there was no difference between the first and the second collections; and both concentrated on the earlier years in the lives of the writers. One man's life story expressed the reason for this 'leaning backwards' quite explicitly: "Because ten years had been spent in the war and in organising life and income after that, it felt like during the next fifty years nothing much happened" (Kilkki 2004, p. 309). However, there was one new feature of the writing in this second collection. Of these texts, eighty-six are autobiographical and fifty-six are biographies of mothers, while the rest is composed of texts by and about women and family in general; also some poems and fictional texts are a part of this collection (Partanen 1999, p. 2).

This concentration on the mother, on one's own mother or oneself as a mother, showed up right away in my reading. Obviously, for this second collection, people were specifically asked to write about 'Karelian women'. Indeed, even when working on the first collection I had noticed that mothers had been written about, but now the mothers had grown older or old, and some had already died, and thus it was natural to reminisce about them. Daughters had become mothers themselves and had as a consequence realized the quantity of hard work that their mothers had done in making a livelihood for their family; and the same applied for sons who had become fathers. But this concentration on mothers also happened for other reasons too. With the time that had passed since the first collection was made, new focal points had arisen. In the period between these two collections war had become a subject to talk about, greatly aided by the collapse of the Soviet Union. In connection with the changes there, in Finland too some previous taboo subjects were brought into the daylight, with war and its consequences being an important example. As speaking about war started, so those who had participated in the war started to talk. Little by little, the focus became individuals in relation to the war and the 'usual' gender order was followed: first the men spoke, as the veterans of war; then little by little more attention was paid to how women contributed during the war, and also towards reconstruction and recovery. When it comes to women, they had been doubly silenced because of war. First, similarly to men, they had their own experience of the war, but this did not similarly become a public issue. Second, wars wreck homes, but because the work of homemakers, often women, this is largely

invisible, even during peace-time. This part of the war-effort first needed to be acknowledged as work, after which women could eventually be ‘discovered’ to have contributed significantly.

I had first approached the Folklore Archives in 2001 to request access to read the Karelian biographies there. But before this I was already in touch with some other Karelian institutions and agents to find material for my study, looking for both interviewees and for written material. I actually started work in the Folklore Archives in mid 2004, and made a succession of visits there, up to the following February. When my work in the archive ended, I was still not quite sure what I had come up with. To me it appeared, as one of the writers put it regarding her own text, as just “headings of what really happened”. I do not think she was referring to the quality or quantity of her text, and neither did I mean this about my work there. She meant that so much had happened in her life that, even though she wrote at length, this still only covered fragments. This sense of trying to include everything, yet having to select, was obvious to an observant reader. The call to write specifically of one’s own life as a Karelian must have been demanding, too. Nevertheless, there was another reason for this feeling of mine, which did not have so much to do with the stories, and more with having two separate sets of material to compare. The written story format was not easy to follow after working on the interviews: these written texts were well-written and evocative, but some of them were also ‘performative’, in that the tone of voice used was somewhere between a personal life story and the literary presentation of a life. After the down-to-earth ‘my voice’ of the women’s oral tellings in the interviews, reading this adapted written voice proved demanding. Perhaps writing for a public cause and for a possible publication influenced at least some of the writers to pursue their ‘best’ writing style, although I thought this less after reading a book containing a compilation of material from the collections of the 1997–1998 women’s life stories and of the 2001–2002 men’s life stories (Kilkki 2004).

The second time I read these, my attention was diverted from possible literary influences towards what happened in the story, and I also reviewed this book (Loipponen 2005) and contacted its editor. After re-reading my notes and copies I

had made of some stories, I concluded that the basic ‘difference’ was not so much between these two bodies of material, but rather between the two processes I had engaged in. I was already familiar with the process of interviewing when I made the very first draft of the questions I wanted to ask, and then little by little I got to know the women I interviewed, first on the phone, then in the interview encounters, and then during the re-reading and analysing of the interviews carried out. One necessary and important part of that procedure of ‘getting to know’ the war widows was through transcribing the recorded interviews. Coincidentally, I did the transcribing in Sweden, which meant that while working with the tapes that represented the most familiar of Finnish dialects to me, my Karelian grandmother’s dialect, I was surrounded by Swedish. Whilst listening to the recordings, I was enclosed in these women’s worlds which were enveloped in another different one, and simultaneously I was also back in the homes of women interviewed, as well as at my grandma’s house. In addition, the first thematic analysis I made of the transcribed interviews occurred when I was living in a small village over one summer in Swedish Lapland, where even the landscape was a new experience to me. Also the bodily experience of reading them was strong, with the last stage of pregnancy weighing me down somewhat. There was the world of the stories I was reading, this was experienced within another culture around me, and my body resonated with what I made of all this. Added to the mental endeavour, reading had become a very corporeal experience. It had its roots in my grandma’s parlour, where a young child was lying on her bed listening to her grandma, where it was Sunday morning and the radio was on. This knowledge was present in my mind while I had interviewed the widows in their living rooms and this knowledge was also there while reading through the transcripts of these interviews.

These periods of transcribing and analysing were some of the most remarkable experiences of the entire research process, and also the basic ones from which grew my interpretation of narrative memory as loops (discussed later). And regarding the written texts in the archives, my initial encounter with this material was both intimidating and exhausting because of the suddenness and openness of the substantial access I now had to accounts of other people’s lives, and this impression

remained with me until well after having finished my hands-on work in the archive. The period of time I worked in the archive was considerable, and it involved the same slow process of getting to know those who had accounted for their lives as the interviews had. The initial shock of encountering cardboard files full of lives told and having to 'flip through and choose' when, with the interviews, I was involved with each of them from the beginning, continued to reverberate. Also, when reading the edited collection I realized that I had come across some of the writers already. I had read their original texts when working in the archive and increased my familiarity with them while reading through my notes. The stories in the published collection were slightly edited, and so I had also to choose what to include in my notes, the original or the edited versions.

State Data: War Widows' Assistance Pension Application Letters

The process of grasping what was in the written life stories took some time. There was even a point when I thought I might not be able to use the Karelian life stories at all because my first impression was that they differed too much from the spoken material. However, I wanted to look at some additional material from the archive because I wanted to examine the 'how' of telling from different perspectives. This was initially something I connected to time and to the idea of having different layers of source material filtered through the analytic 'now'. The interviews stretched from the moment of telling backwards through time, and the Karelian life stories covered the time before the writing had been done, so both had the notion of backwards-reflection within them, although the present and the future were also featured in them. Counterbalancing this, I was curious about how a war widow might talk about her situation in the middle of her life, 'as it was then' and without so much glancing backwards. Here I was not so naïve as to suppose this a more authentic voice, but it would certainly be a differently time-situated one. I wanted to include in the research a 'voice' or a 'moment of telling' that would 'run against' the telling backwards that is symptomatic of reminiscence talk, although of course any telling covers the present and the future in the telling itself.

Initially I had the abstract thought of wanting ‘something else too’, which realized itself in the form of my interest in war widows’ pension applications. I came to this via a series of events. The applications were mentioned in my discussions with the War Widow’s Association, and also in some of the earlier written material I read. From early on, I suspected that the applications might include personal writing. This led to an eight-month-long process of seeking a research permit to work in the State Treasury, where these applications are held. My first contact with this state administrative authority was made in September 2004, but I was unable to work there until the following May. This long procedure was due to the sensitive nature of the pension applications, which include information on the economic situation and the state of health of the applicant, and are therefore declared secret for fifty years after the person in question has died (the Act on the Openness of the Government Activities (621/1991), Clauses 23 and 31). This Act controls the access to public registers, and the personal data of the applicants are protected by the Personal Data Act (523/1999). However, after several negotiations by post, e-mail, phone and finally after a letter of recommendation from Docent Anni Vilkkio from the Social Politics Department of the Helsinki University, I was invited to a meeting in the State Treasury, after which I was granted access to these documents. This result required that I promised to withhold from publishing the names of any applicants and to ensure that nobody I mentioned could be recognised.

In addition, I contacted the Data Protection Board and completed a form called the ‘Description of the Scientific Research Data File’ (Personal Data Act (523/1999, Section 10), which is required for setting up a registered research data file. I committed myself to protecting the privacy of the pensions applicants and also to be responsible in handling the data as the controller of the new data file. The principles of data file protection for manually and digitally stored data were explained. Since the personal data that I was handling were subject to confidentiality provisions (provisions pertaining to secrecy obligation and/or confidentiality of a document), an entry concerning that information in the record file was made. The principles of data protection were explained in order to fulfil the legal obligations that exist. Finally, I had to declare how I was going to store the record file. This data was not going to be

destroyed, but the tapes (the record file included also the interviews and the biographies) would be stored with me and the transcripts without names in the respective university department. The Data Protection Board officer suggested also destroying the original names as soon as possible (Maija Kleemola, Letter from the Data Protection Board, 23.2.2005).

Such a demanding but finally successful process was also a very educational experience for me in acquiring a particular kind of researcher identity. I wrote in my research diary on the first working day in the archive that I felt as a researcher should. I was eager to start working. "State Treasury, 16.5.2005. The work begins. I had a cup of coffee in the Old Hakaniemi Market Hall. In mornings like this, to be a researcher feels like the fulfilment of something. Perhaps I was meant to be a researcher. This type of archive work could be for me. With all the entry passes the place reminds of, and it is, An Institution. This is a place where you do not normally have access, and which you can now enter with your new status: a researcher" (Loipponen 2005-6).

The first day that I worked on the pension applications was spent reading one single application. For some reason, before ever seeing a war widow's pension application, my researcher intuition had led me to the right place. This archive, or rather registry, was filled with personal documents. To use the word 'application' of these files was in a way misleading, since every application is actually an application file, consisting of every document relating to an application. One file can be up to 134 pages; in this example, there were twenty-four letters of several pages from the widow, three letters from the son and also a sixteen-page driving journal of the deceased husband, needed for sorting out his income; and the other items were letters from the social welfare and the Treasury officials. The first application file I read consisted of eighteen 'papers', as I called them, and one such 'paper' could include several pages, as the questions and answers to one situation at one point in time were often filed together. In my research diary, I name the first applicant on the first of the pile of files which were picked out for my research. This is 'Lahja', the widow of a blacksmith from Vyborg (this is not her real name, nor her husband's real occupation

nor their place of origin). In the first note in the research diary, I write that I have read about Lahja and the stages of her life from the 1939 war up until 2002, when she applied for a supplementary war widow pension: “The death of her husband started a long process with the state officials. This is something that I did not ask about when interviewing. I did not understand how skilled one needed to become in applying for a pension, especially if a raise was the goal” (Loipponen 2005-6, p. 3). Indeed, the amount of effort and writing put into the applications showed in the results. This was not talked about during my interviews with the five war widows, but then I did not ask about this side of their lives. We talked about economy, but more in terms of work and much less concerning state benefits. The money they received was mentioned, but only in passing, and at that stage I was not knowledgeable enough about the assistance system to give enough attention to the subject.

In my next diary entry (Loipponen 2005-6, p. 4), I write about the fact that “the applications are in a different order from what you would expect. This means that the latest file is placed always on top, so the reader happens to follow time chronologically backwards. This is not how a story is told, a story is told from something that happened before onwards. This reminds me of an interesting figure. I am thinking of ‘looped circles’. Is it possible to draw one big loop from this time backwards, a loop that involves some bigger entity, which the story will then start to work itself into smaller entities?” When I read this note later, I realized that I had contradicted myself. First I referred to time as ‘usual’, the direction assumed being that from 1939 to the present. In the next sentence, I express that the order is different from what is expected. Because of this, at first I used the more common way of marking the years, as running towards the present. But in reality, the application file was organized in the reverse way, and this caught my attention. I believe this was one of the decisive moments of the research process but it was only later that I realised it was so crucial. This new material was needed for the sake of opening up the structures of telling that I had declared as my subject. Also, at this moment, even though I do not use the word ‘narrative’, I did somehow start to grasp that what I was after might relate to narrative research. All the three bodies of

material I was working on plus my own thinking started to organise themselves in a way that I would later call a 'narrative encounter' or a 'reflexive encounter', with its tool being 'analytical reflexivity'. The 'usual' order of thinking was broken down, which turned out to be extremely useful for my study.

I travelled to the State Treasury once or twice a week for over a year, except when I was out of the country. Going through the applications was very slow, since each file in each application contained a lot of material, including numerous hand-written items. My intention was to manually select the Karelian applicants from out of the other applicants. However, as with the Karelian life stories, it was difficult to confine myself to just the selected papers. Indeed, these state papers and how they were organized encouraged this kind of unselective reading by me. When applying for a war widow's pension, the basis of this was the death of the husband, and the place of origin did not matter at all. I decided that I would read without categorizing, although I would focus on the applications from Karelians. Because of this new material, more than 'Karelian' war widows entered my research. Perhaps this was the moment when I started to read 'war', even 'lives', in the documents of the Karelians as well. Everyday survival was the determining factor in the lives of all these women. Simultaneously, there were individual variations which was not linked to the different types of material. The pension system did not seem to distinguish between people according to their place of origin. However, based on the stories that I was told, differences in treatment existed between the 'locals' and the Karelians. One body of material started to fill in the gaps in the other.

Fictional Presentations

Initially I had planned to include fiction and film in my study, as well as interviews and pensions applications. Through these different modes of expression, I was hoping to understand something of how the war widows were depicted and viewed and how this might connect with how the widows described themselves. During the preliminary research period, I intended to use fictional presentations as research material per se, with the usual grand idea of using everything I possibly include.

However, this soon shifted to using fiction to illuminate theoretical and methodological thinking.

Literature related to Second World War blooms in Finland, and also literature that concerns the Karelians; often, these two are combined. For example, one of the special themes in the 2002 Gothenburg Book Fair in Sweden was Finland, and then Karelia. Eeva Kilpi, a well-known novelist and poet, whose Karelian roots and the war have been a constant theme in her writing (Kilpi 1998), was there to talk about her latest book, concerned with the making of memory, Karelia, her mother and the war (Kilpi 2001). A Finnish journalist wrote that one after another people from the audience stood up to talk about their memories of Karelia and the war (Ahola 2002). These people had migrated to Sweden, where they had perhaps not talked about their war-time experiences at all. The journalist realized how wrong she had been in 1988, when she reviewed a book by another Finnish novelist, Iris Kähäri, and declared that such fine novels would gradually end the nostalgia for Karelia. What happened was the opposite, the collapse of the Soviet Union unleashed memories. In 1988 she had thought that sooner or later people would stop longing for what is lost. In Gothenburg, she came to the conclusion that for many writers this longing was actually the driving force, that the war was the common denominator in many books published recently, even by young writers. The war may not always be mentioned directly, but the landscape of loss and deprivation was still there, while modern Finnish film too has explored a mental landscape with loss at the centre (Sundholm 2002, 2005).

A similar experience of the long silenced ‘witness statements’ of Finns, in particular of Karelians, was noticed by Marja Taussi Sjöberg when she held presentations of her book *Martta and Eero* (1999) in Sweden. This is an edited collection of her parents, Martta’s and Eero’s, correspondence with each other between 1939 and 1944. In the audience were many Finns who shared a great urge to tell their own personal war memories (Loipponen 2001). What she said about this was one factor in my deciding to interview any Karelian war widows who had moved to Sweden. For this purpose, I visited a Finnish club in Umeå organized by the Finnish congregation

there, as well as contacting several Finns in the media and other organizations to locate possible interviewees. Eventually, however, this plan fizzled out as I became engrossed in the other research activities discussed in this chapter.

Reading war-related novels and watching films on the subject of Karelian evacuees and on war became an integral part of the research process. I was not familiar with this material before, and spent two periods in reading marathons of this kind of literature, although I found there were not that many war widow characters present in these books. The best-selling author Laila Hirvisaari (until 2004 known as Hietamies) in her *Lappeenranta*-series (also known as the City of Linden Trees - series, seven volumes in 1972–2004) has a character, Liisa Lunden (née Parmala), who becomes a war widow in the third volume. In Hirvisaari's *Kannas*-series (Karelian Isthmus – series, five volumes, 1980–1984) Helmi Elisa (both first names) is eleven years when the series begins and a thirty-one-year-old war widow when it ends. Her husband is killed early in the war and she is wounded herself. Her love story with a doctor causes trouble, as well as her not always managing well with her daughter. The books in the series follow the story of people in a small village on the Karelian Isthmus from the 1920s until 1945, when they are evacuated elsewhere in Finland. In 2001, Hirvisaari returned to her *Lappeenranta*-series after a twenty-five year gap, and placed the fourth volume in the series at the time of the Continuation War. In *Syksyksi kotiin* (Autum, 2001), Liisa Lunden's life as a war widow is followed as a continuation to the 1976 book.

In the whole series by Hirvisaari, the main issue is the war and how to survive it, as experienced by and mirrored through the people of a small city (*Lappeenranta* is a Finnish South-Eastern border city) and the neighbouring countryside, both in Karelia. Liisa Lunden is presented as a very orderly hard-working woman who is left with two children after her husband dies in the war. She works as a Lotta supervisor and she is of great support to people. She has got engaged, “since she is a war widow” (Hietamies 2001, p. 21), although her son thinks that she is not in love with her fiancé. Likewise, when she meets with a friend of her deceased husband, he asks her if she is getting married as a compromise, and that “so many war widows” are

“tremendously needy for a man” (Hietamies 2001, p. 40). A friend does not see this ‘lack of man’ comment as such an insult as she does, because it comes from a man who probably just wanted to give good advice, who was on his way to war (Hietamies 2001, p. 41). Liisa Lunden worries about her own son and other children who will have to grow up without their father: “Where were all the fatherless children, whom nobody asked what it was like to lose a father in the war? Nobody was interested in the war orphans, since they did not carry any signs of visible damage” (Hietamies 2001, p. 233).

Helmi Elisa and Liisa Lunden must be some of the best-known war widows in Finland, as measured by the sales figures of all the Hirvisaari books (over three million copies sold, while many readers have commented that they can identify with the protagonists in the Hietamies books (Linko 1997, pp. 190–192; Linko 2000).

Concerning my research, despite my original idea of combining autobiographical accounts and fictional representations, despite all the reading I did, fiction did not become a separate body of data in it. This was not because of valuing one type of material over another. The war widows in the novels were a part of a character gallery and did not stay the centre of attention. Also, as the research proceeded, fiction lost some its original appeal, mostly because my interest in the autobiographical texts increased. Also, the meeting between factual and fictional representation (as much as they can be separated) in my research was in the form of my theoretical ideas being strongly influenced by ideas coming from literature.

Virginia Woolf begins (18 April 1939) her autobiography gallantly from her first memory: “This was of red and purple flowers on a black ground – my mother’s dress; and she was sitting either in a train or in an omnibus, and I was on her lap.” (Woolf 1976, p. 164) Woolf guesses that they were returning to London from their summer place, because of the light that she remembers. Then suddenly she decides to allow herself to remember in a different way, since “it is more convenient artistically to suppose that we were going to St Ives, for that will lead to my other memory, which also seems to be my first memory.” This other first memory, “the most

important of all my memories”, is about lying “half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St. Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach: and then breaking, one, two, one, two, behind a yellow blind.” (Woolf 1976, p. 164). Woolf did not try to hide the fact that, while she was writing her own autobiography, she needed to modify memory, to remember more conveniently. Furthermore, since she was writing her autobiography, she had to put her memories in order, “for that will lead to my other memory”, and this was for the sake of the story (Woolf 1976, p. 28). But how to arrange one’s memories when one has to choose and modify all the time? How can what one knows but cannot remember be brought into the research encounter?

A Letter to My Grandfather Who Died as a War Hero

Dear Grandfather,

During the latter half of writing my doctoral thesis, I started writing letters to you. We have of course never met. You died twenty-four years before I was born, fighting on the Karelian Isthmus, two weeks after Soviet troops had launched their heaviest attack since starting the war in November 1939. That war was given the name of the Winter War, because it was fought in the winter, but also because it was extremely cold then. You should know. I have read that most men were very poorly dressed, the army could not even provide them all with a uniform. You might have had warm clothes since you were the only son and already in charge of your family farm, but they say that you were a bit too brave, that you did not keep your head down in the trenches. My brother was told this by a distant relative. He took this as a sign that you were not the war hero that your son, our father, had thought you were, because being reckless is not the same as being brave. I don’t know. You could have been just scared, overtired and anxious. It must have started to look bad by that point because the Mannerheim line had broken two days earlier, if the days then made any sense to you. This was after enormous resistance and doses of ‘sisu’, guts, as the spirit of the Winter War was called even in the foreign press. Yet out in the extremely cold February nights you would have hardly have dreamt of fame, but of

more ammunition and sleep. You knew that your family was not far away, but what you did not know was that your wife and your son had already been evacuated elsewhere in Finland and they were safe. I am writing to you because it has occurred to me that you did not know this. And everything in their lives changed because you died there and because of the war more generally.

The idea of my thesis is to study such women as grandma, the woman who became a widow on 13 February 1940, with a child, without a home, since Karelia was evacuated and eventually lost permanently. Yes, we lost the war, and no, we did not lose our independence, but parts of the country were nonetheless annexed. I have asked these women questions about being a war widow, from the time they arrived in new areas of the country and were starting to settle. I have also read a lot of Karelian life stories of that period, and sat in the archives reading war widows' assistance pension applications from women like grandma. You might think this odd since it is over sixty years since the war ended. Indeed, why should I be interested? To begin with, their stories are all basically about the consequences of war being felt all the time, even today sixty years on. Their war story is thus relevant even now. And they are not alone, either, because there does not seem to be any end to wars. If I can show how this particular group of war widows tells about their experiences, then I will have contributed a little to understanding how war and violence affects people in their everyday lives and continue to do so many years afterwards.

I write these letters to you, but I write them also as a protest. I object to people's granddads disappearing into wars. Just this one war generated many consecutive losses: When grandma lost you, her son missed out on knowing his father, and at that moment, if one wants to be really dramatic (I am), then his forthcoming children had lost their chances to know a grandfather. Your son was a ten-month-old baby when you died. I hope that he was told that you had whispered loving caring words into his ears when he was lying in his cot. He was born in April 1939, so you had time to do it, although maybe only for a month or two. Some of the men were called up into the army to do work on the fortifications by that summer, but they perhaps remained at home until mid-October, when basically every man in the reserve was called up, as

you know, for an 'extra rehearsal'. This meant preparing for war. In the best of cases, you had about half a year to be with your son. This was the only time he had for knowing his father, the only time you had for knowing your son.

I haven't ever written letters to a grandfather before, because my mother's father died only a few years after the war, the same war in which you had been fighting, and he left behind nine children. It was not thought that he died because of war, but who knows. In any case, I had two grandmothers, instead of four grandparents. I never travelled to visit 'our grandparents', but instead either to my father's mother or to my mother's mother. Also my childhood home was my grandmother's house. Grandfather was not exactly missing, either, there just was no such category of person. In both of these houses, there was a picture of a man whom everybody knew but who was not much talked about. One was you, a handsome guy in uniform, the other one was a solemn wedding picture of a couple where the man very much looked like my mother. I knew that these two men somehow belonged with our grandmothers, but this was vague, because they had never been present and so what this was like was almost unimaginable. It was the two grandmothers alone who decided about everything, nobody else came even anywhere near this, and our mothers and fathers were different compared with them. We children took our orders from our grandmothers in their houses, and so too did our parents.

The hurt of not having had a grandfather was something I started to experience only when I had children of my own. By that time my father had died – yes, even your son died young, and I believe the root cause for his early death was that he longed for you all his life. Suddenly for me there was this strange feeling of history repeating itself. I had not had a grandfather, and my children would not have one from my side of the family either. There and then I felt the loss of my grandfather and I wept for somebody that I had never known. Can one miss something that one has never had, somebody asked in one of the books that I have been reading for the thesis research – and from my experience, I can only answer that it is possible. I had lost you before I was born, but I have still missed you.

I have only ever seen you in one photograph. You look very much like my father did, and like my brother and now my son, too. I believe I look more like you than I do my mother. We would have made a great four generation picture. Your photograph was hanging on the wall in my grandma's parlour, behind her rocking chair where she used to sit and listen to the radio when she was not working. I must have asked her about your portrait, and she must have explained to me who you were. Next to the photograph there was a framed letter signed by Marshall Mannerheim. Only much later did I realize what the letter was about, that in it you were made into a war hero, somebody who died for his country. For a child, having the letter signed by Marshall Mannerheim felt somehow special. As an adult, I studied the signature, which is written with a real ink pen. I was suspicious about this because since I was born everything has been copied. I guess there was not an individual letter of condolence with his signature on it for all those nearly 90,000 soldiers who died in the three wars of World War II. The fact is that there was some prestige in having the letter signed by Mannerheim on the wall, but I did not connect that honour to what it really meant, that grandma's husband, you, had been killed.

You were always absent, but somehow you were there still. This presence of an absence is one of the themes in my research, although it is not very easy to pin down the essence of what it means. In talking with the war widows that I interviewed about their lives, the absent men pierced through the present in a self-evident manner even after the long gap in time between then and their deaths. Their memories are of a time shared together and of a man that they started a family together with. Even without my having had any such concrete embodied experience of you, you still belonged to that childhood room of mine, a part of my world then. It was a special room for me. My bed was in that big parlour where your photograph was, and I often fell asleep when grandma was still listening to her radio and sometimes woke up to its soft sound. Either grandma talked about you or not, but in a way she did not have to: through your image on the wall, your presence was greater than your absence. There was something special about your portrait; perhaps it was the uniform, or the straight clear vision in your eyes, but you were always so coherent and noble. I didn't think of that at the time. It was only later that I understood that, when everything else

changed, you never got older or became different. You belonged to my childhood as much as my toys or books. I calculated your age while writing my thesis and you were the same age when you died as my father was when I was born, twenty-five years old. You really were as young as you looked in the photograph when you died. This picture of a young soldier is, then, a part of the mental framework of who I am and where I come from.

A bit further along on the wall, just above my bed, there was another image, a framed photograph of a white church. I must have been told about it since I have always known that it was the picture of the Äyräpää church, yet it was a picture of a church I had never been to. It was my grandparents' local parish church in Karelia. With a distinct quadrate form to it, it was totally different from all the other churches that I had seen, because the ones I had visited or seen were much older-looking. Just like the picture of you, this picture also differed from everything else in the room. The photo of the church was black-and-white and so was your portrait, when all the rest was in colour in that room. Still I never thought of these photographs as 'old'. You were always young and fresh in your soldier's portrait and the white church of the picture was 'new' or 'futuristic', even when I would not have known such a word to describe it, and I don't think I ever thought of the white church as a modern building either. It was how I thought this church was, fancy and fresh. Grandma had orange and lemon trees standing on the floor. They were by any standard unusual in our climate, but she managed to grow them in this room where there were a lot of windows and the baking oven wall on the other side of the room released extra warmth. Behind these colourful trees, there were these two photographs, one of you and one of the Äyräpää church. Neither Karelia nor you were ever gloomy presences in the room.

Now I only have a small passport-size copy of your photograph. The big photograph was destroyed in a fire, along with the negatives. I have not found a family portrait taken of you with your wife and child. There are the pictures of you, my grandma and my father, but separately. I don't know if there were more photographs that disappeared in the fire. But, whatever the fire took, it saved one peculiar thing. This

is something that I have to tell you about, since perhaps this has been the starting point for my doctoral project, although the fire occurred chronologically long before the thesis was ever given even a thought. I arrived at our house, or rather, at the house my childhood home, grandma's house, the next morning after the fire. There was smoke still rising from the ruins, and bits and pieces here and there, all black. Yet, for some strange reason, in the middle of that sad destruction, I found a single page of a book that I had often looked at in the back room glass cabinet. This was the room that was seldom used, it was the best room, so to speak. I was still allowed to play there, and grandma had even given me the use of the right-hand side part of the fine glass cabinet. The cabinet was of dark wood, it had glass sliding doors, but on my side there was a door and a key so I could put my secrets there safely, away from my brother's reach. I put there my Barbie dolls and the ones I had carved myself from wood, and also my paper dolls. When playing in front of my part of the cabinet, I only barely noticed the books, several heavy black and red books. Or were they red and grey? I don't remember ever reading the books, but I must have taken them out, since the format of the book was clear in my mind. In them there were short descriptions of people and the tiniest photographs attached to them, page after page. I knew the name of the series of books, 'Siirtokarjalaisten tie', 'The Way of the Evacuated Karelians'. All those hours spent playing there must have made the name familiar to me, or perhaps I was explicitly told the meaning of it. Obviously it was something that was in every house where I went with my grandmother. Everyone from Karelia had it, since all the evacuees were presented in the series, which recorded where they had left and where they had settled, where they lived and how earned their living. This was the part of my 'Karelian' upbringing that I was not aware of as a child, I just took it for granted.

This is a long introduction to the odd thing that I wanted to tell you about. This is that, on the yard of the house which had vanished in flames, I found a piece of paper, just slightly burnt at the edges. Of all the possible things that could remain after a total fire, it was the page of the book where my grandma's journey from Karelia was introduced that had survived. She must have kept something more inside the book, some memento or something that protected exactly that page when all the rest of it

burned. I also found a pile of cards and letters, and maybe it was these that had been inside it. The cards were her Mother's day 'To Our Grandmother' cards, which we two grandchildren have her, while I did not even look at the letters then. There was also a medal there, slightly melted on one edge. This was the medal given to her after you had died. It read: 1939–1940. HONOUR. FATHERLAND. Everything smelt of smoke. I still don't understand how it was possible that these things had remained. The paper of the book page was the thinnest silk paper type, which had to be used to be able to include the mini life stories of over 400,000 evacuees. I was standing on my childhood backyard, totally shocked at all the destruction, with even the trees next to the house burnt and black and the house destroyed down to its concrete base, and I found the one separate page of what had been a series of massive books which was exactly the most important page to me. It felt so unbelievable and – and this is hard to explain – also so right.

Grandma had died a year before the fire happened. I could not think of anything else when it happened but that she was always there for me, she always waved from the window where she could see furthest, and that in a way she was waving to me again through this page. I looked at her photograph on that loose page, burnt on the sides, and she looked back at me, and perhaps this really was the moment when I first felt the need to write about what had been. I left the ruins of my dearest place holding onto a piece of evidence of the life that had been there before I was. It told my grandmother's life before she came there, since the page told the story of how she had left her home on the Karelian Isthmus, where she moved after that, where eventually settled and built a home for her and her son, and then it eventually led to us. I did not think of it then, but in a way I took away the memories of those two places with me, of my childhood home and the one in Karelia where I had never been. All that was left was a page of a book, some cards, a few letters, a medal, and the intense canvas of memories that I would then close up for over ten years after this shock of the fire.

When I later started the research project, this canvas was pulled out into the daylight. It was somewhat faded, frayed, but still recognizable. A fragment of a wall rug called

it forth. I should also tell how this happened. I had been interviewing Eija, your sister-in-law's daughter. I often visited them with grandma and they often came to see us, too. For a child, it was self-evident that they lived nearby. Now I know that this was not necessarily so, since not all the evacuated families ended up living near their relatives. I had asked Eija to tell me about what she remembered of her aunt and her life as a widow. At some stage Eija started to talk about grandma's house and she mentioned a 'ryijy', a wall rug that had hung on the wall next to my bed. She told me that the name of the wall rug was 'The Holy Tree'. Suddenly I could see the wall rug, even feel it, since I had often played with the fringes of it, and yet I could not remember what the pattern or the colours were like. I just recalled that as a child I could not figure out some of the details of the pattern, that those pictures were puzzles. And Grandfather, you know what, I have revisited that feeling while doing my research and I have written about this in the thesis. Perhaps, Eija said, the rug was green and black. In my mind I just saw a grey shimmering square on the wall, but I knew exactly where it had been. I also remembered how everything else was in the room, too. I could see in my mind your soldier photograph, the signed letter, the church, the rows of windows on two walls of the room, the tall lemon and orange trees that grew well because of the light and warmth in the room, grandma rocking slowly in her chair and the radio on, Sunday service being broadcast. All of a sudden, as Eija spoke, the house, the rooms and how it had been, all emerged into my head, as if I had just closed the door to the house. It must be that I had been too scared earlier to look back inside the house in my memories. Aided by Eija's telling, I was able to return.

Afterwards I kept dreaming of grandma's house, and I wandered in there in my sleep. I even found new corners and cupboards and explored them all. Everything that had been placed in some closed corner of my brain for so many years returned. My childhood, this sudden return to grandma's house, and then the research I had just begun about the war widows, were all enmeshed in my head like a huge field of diverging paths. I did not know what would come out of it, but I knew that all these things were joined. The missing wall rug pattern came to symbolize this process of memories emerging. If I could remember its pattern, I felt, then I would remember all

the rest, too, and then I could use this as a tool in my work. Then on a quite different occasion something somebody said as an aside reminded me again of grandma's wall rug. I started jotting down in my notepad what I had in mind. How does one make a wall rug? I had no idea. How does one make a text in which widowed Karelian refugee women talk about their experiences after they have settled in new places? How could I include in their story my grandmother's story and my family history? I didn't know, but I knew that there had to be a way. Texts, wall rugs, they are all handiwork – and I knew, granddad, suddenly this gave me the format for my doctoral research on all these combined stories. I would try to tell the story as if I was weaving a wall rug. Just as through weaving a wall rug a pattern emerges, so my writing would be like weaving a pattern with all the material that I had. In the process, memories, like the pattern that I had forgotten, would emerge out of their oblivion, for others to see. They would do so just as I had looked at my grandma's wall rug, admiring it but also being puzzled by the meaning of some details. Little by little, through this weaving, I would be able to make something of the past visible.

So this is what I have been doing in my research. I have been trying to weave a wall rug on paper made of memories. I have been filling in gaps, interstices, absences, silences. This is where you play a major role, since it is your absence and silence that in a way started the whole thing. Now, through research and writing, I have tried to piece together and tell this absence, and I have also been involved with reading and telling the absences of other granddads like you. Strangely, they are not empty absences. Absence is in itself a kind of telling. I'll tell you more about that in my next letter. Now I have to rush to get the young one from day-care. The two bigger ones are already in school. Actually, it is likely that, but for the war, you would have been alive at least to know the big ones. You would have been seventy-seven when I had my first child, and then eighty-three for the second, then eighty-seven for the third. I wish I had met you, and it would have been so great if you had been there for my children.

Bye for now, your granddaughter, Jaana.

Conclusion

I have several folders filled with articles and press cuttings on my research themes. However, recently I found a newspaper clipping on the subject of Karelia in another file, not connected to my research. To my surprise, this article, ‘The Lost Country of Memories’, was dated Friday 14 June 1991 (Valkonen 1991). Earlier in the thesis, my long-term interest in forced migrations as one of the reasons underpinning researching Karelian war widows was mentioned. However, I thought I arrived at the specific focus on Karelia only in the early stages of doing the PhD. But storing a piece of writing on Karelia in 1991 suggests that my study may have had even longer roots, and, it is intriguing to think that I may have had the basic idea somewhere at the back of my mind ten years before officially naming the project.

Nevertheless, I do not regard these connections as a proof of any straightforward cause and effect development, but rather the opposite – they are actually markers of how contingent research processes are, and how pliable they are to changes and influences. In my study, when a ‘cause’ or a memory was called forth, a new perspective opened up to the research and this became integrated into the whole. A similar process took place also when the research materials were brought together and ‘interacted’ through the analytical work I engaged in, and eventually they became constitutive, not just illuminative, of each others’ strengths as well as the gaps and interstices in them.

Methodologically, proceeding with my research in stages over time, it has been possible to explore the researcher’s analytical reflections and interpretational reactions to the changing frame of the analysis: even though in a formal sense a longitudinal method has not been used (Thomson & Holland 2003, p. 236), clearly there are unfolding over-time aspects to the analyses produced and conclusions tentatively arrived at. This points up the ontological and epistemological dimensions of my project, for the nature of research ‘things’ and the kinds of claims that can be made about them and how they are understood have been at the forefront of the work

I have carried out. The research encounters I have examined in detail in this chapter have still allowed only fragmentary access to aspects of a person's life, or rather an array of representations of this, and consequently providing the reader of the thesis with the basis of interpretation and transparency concerning the process involved has been necessary, to avoid a sense of closure with regard to both the individuals in question and the work as a whole. As a result, each such encounter has been documented as extensively as possible, guided by respect for the detail, complexity and richness of the research accounts.

Chapter 2 has presented how the work in interviewing, reading the Karelian life stories, and exploring the pension applications came about. In parallel to providing this mental and practical framework for the consecutive stages of the research process, some basis for the interpretation of the research material has also been introduced. In Chapter 3, all the research material – the war widows' tellings and the archival encounters – is brought together and considered in relation to the term 'narrative', with a focus on the theoretical understanding of what is done with the material in the process of research and interpretation. The two chapters are closely connected through their emphasis on how knowledge is produced and unfolding analysis of this.

Image 2. Seven young women & a baby boy in a meadow



Chapter 3. Narrative's Long Exposure

Introduction

In analysing the three bodies of research material, the interviews with the war widows, the Karelian life stories and the pension applications letters, and exploring how war, loss and its consequences are told through these, I used a narrative methodology. My practise for narrative analysis is one which has developed during the research process of gathering and encountering the material I am presenting and discussing in the thesis. The title of this chapter, 'Narrative's Long Exposure', refers both to this process and also to how the project finds its inspiration for conceptual and theoretical thinking from visual fields including photography. In it, I continue building on the idea of analytical reflexivity mentioned earlier, with the researcher's role in producing knowledge being a part of the narrative approach in my research (Stanley 1992, pp. 3–4; Forrest and Giles 2001, pp. 52–57). The analysis of the research encounters is intertwined with a more thematic analysis of the oral and written material. Time and space are used as narrative tools in reading the material and they find their concrete expression, for example, in telling about home and the evacuation from Karelia.

Defining Narrative

My understanding of 'narrative' in this research has developed parallel to collecting my research material and writing about it. In the beginning of the project, other terms than narrative were used to describe the material, such as life stories, autobiographical accounts of lives, testimonies, documents of life, and oral histories. This initial state of innocence was short-lived, since soon narrative was present everywhere; 'it is simply there, like life itself', as an often used quotation from Barthes (1982, p. 79; orig. article in 1966) comments. Earlier in my interrupted academic career, I had gradually shifted from linguistics and literature to cultural studies and social research. My 1980s lecture notes on Chomsky (deep and surface

structures), de Saussure (system of signs and parole), Wellek and Warren (definition of literature) had been gathering dust, when around the year 2000 I found myself surrounded by social scientists with an orientation towards reading culture and who all seemed to be engaging with a narrative project. It became obvious that I had missed ‘the narrative turn’ in the social sciences, which, as described by Heikkinen (2000, p.48), in any case only gradually found its way into Finland. The pace was accelerating, however, for the interdisciplinary *Finnish Network of Narrative Studies* was established in 2000. A similar enthusiasm for narrative both in and outside Finland soon became obvious to subscribers to the Finnish narrative mailing list, as we continuously received information on conferences where narrative was attached to almost any possible research subject. Narrative might have started elsewhere and earlier, but the atmosphere was certainly about something new taking place; one of the first announcements that I received from the Finnish Network was from February 2001, calling for papers for the ‘First Narrative & Memory Research Group Conference’ at the University of Huddersfield. When I continued my postgraduate studies abroad, the auto/biographically oriented and Plummer-influenced *Documents of Life* group that I joined in Newcastle had soon become the *Northern Narratives Network*, then the *Northern and Scottish Narratives Network*, and by 2007 I was on the mailing list for the *Centre for Narrative and Auto/Biographical Studies* in Edinburgh (see NABS 2007).

Despite my background, and the rapid introduction I had had to narrative, I did not find it easy to define what I meant by a narrative, not to mention ‘narrative analysis’, when it came to my own research. I wrote on certain aspects of my project and gave presentations, but I named this work as doing the groundwork for narrative analysis. I also thought of what I was doing as exploring the connections between writing and narrative: in the same way that I saw narrative scholars inspecting stories, I would explore the story form in writing, and this I saw as a possible narrative project.³⁷ Finally, in an e-mail to a colleague, I dared to express the possibility that, after

³⁷ The idea of writing as a part of narrative research was shared with a group of other researchers in a course on narrative analysis that I gave in the University of Lapland (2005). Everybody in the group said one of the reasons for wanting to do narrative research was their interest in writing.

ransacking memory, place, Karelia and writing, it was time to move on to narrative analysis. I attached an article in-progress to this e-mail message and asked her if she thought there was anything there or in the other texts that she had read that could be the basis for a future narrative analysis. Her answer was immediate: “I do not know myself what is narrative analysis other than analysing what is being told, and this is what you are already doing, analysing how the experience of temporality can be expressed through language and so made understood. As that is a question about the experience of temporality concerning both your interviewees and your own – can they [ie. narrative and temporality] be separated? Thus, if you ask me about the next move, I would say that you should continue in the direction where you are already going – do not see all this thinking about producing dialogical knowledge just as pre-work or as background work before you do (the real) narrative analysis. You can also bring up diverse other issues from the interviews and the texts, all the way down to the smallest details in the use of language, if you want to, but hold on to the idea of an encounter that produces knowledge” (Löyttyniemi 2004).

This positive response was important in many ways. Above all, my colleague was right. I had set about producing dialogical knowledge in the encounters as a goal, but I had not been able to perceive this as part of a narrative approach. In parallel to this, a related question arose. What should the content that a narrative analysis proper would require be, if this was not the work that I had been doing with ‘thinking about producing dialogical knowledge’? I had thought that I was looking for a way to analyse my materials. But if I did not connect studying the dialogue and the encounters this came out of as part of the narrative analysis, then how did I actually perceive these materials? Regarding the war widows’ accounts, did I see these as separate from the context in which they were originated? Since I did not, and there was no question about that, clearly it was time for me to redefine how I viewed my research material and what I was doing with it. This had to be done especially in connection with the term narrative. For some reason, I had seemed to disconnect the encounters and the stories told in the encounters when I referred to narrative analysis. This way of thinking had given rise to two differing practises. When I was analysing the interview encounters, the only way of doing this was to include parts of what the

widows had said or things what I had read which illuminated this, and this is what I had been doing. Yet, simultaneously, I saw the stories as largely separate entities and felt that I was not accessing them in what I was writing about the encounters.

It did not take long to locate a possible reason for my having created these different rankings. I could only think (not blame) that my education in literature was directing me to analyse a story as a fictional construction and as a form within a frame.

Similarly, in the afterword to the new edition of *Narrative Fiction*, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2002, p. 136) recognizes that, when her book was originally published in 1983, narratology for her was mainly a formalist-structuralist discipline. Now, with my research project, I had material that I did not regard as ‘deliberately fictive’ (Barthes 1986, p. 54), and I was hesitant about how to analyse what was told to me as factual stories of life.

At first sight, running the ‘lives told’ by the women concerned through a narrative mill to highlight the story qualities and textual units, seemed to treat these materials from a viewpoint which did not respect them as versions of the unpredictable, of ‘lives lived’ in a world in which Aristotelian ideas of a good tragedy did not apply. However, at the same time, I also knew that I was contradicting myself: a dichotomy between different types of stories was not something that I really believed in, and I did not see the war widows’ accounts as opposite to ‘creating a story’, but rather as a merger of different strategies. And certainly describing one’s life in a writing competition, or when this is done as a part of a pension application that can determine one’s income, will have an effect on the construction of the story and its use of rhetoric devices, even when this is still not the same as writing fiction. Jacques Rancière (2006, p. 38) expresses this precisely when he writes that “the real must be fictionalized to be able to be thought”. Combining different types of expression, such as artistic or documentary, opens up possibilities for thinking and talking a story or a history. This is not the same as everything being fiction, although, as Rancière (2006, p. 38) writes, the notion of ‘narrative’ often presumes an opposition between the real and artifice, where “both the positivists and the deconstructionists are lost”. I found in this the explanation for why I had not been able to progress the idea and practice

of narrative. This was that, while I had not treated ‘stories’ or ‘history’ as opposites, I had still placed them in different categories, those of the real and unreal. However, Rancière (2006, pp. 38–39) explains how the logic of facts and the logic of stories are profoundly linked:

“[I]t is not a matter of claiming that ‘History’ is only made up of stories that we tell ourselves, but simply that ‘the logic of stories’ and the ability to act as historical agents go together. Politics and art, like forms of knowledge, construct ‘fictions’, that is to say *material* rearrangements of signs and images, relationships between what is seen and what is said, between what is done and what can be done.”

Regarding my study, this idea of a similar logic existing between stories and history, in the sense that “all human inquiry and reportage are essentially the same” (Atkinson 1992, p. 3), and seeing them as material rearrangements, proved a key to understanding ‘how’ history or stories are in an ontological sense, and also to how they can be analysed, too. Their ‘truth’ lies in their construction. In consequence, they can be analysed through both their form and their content. In doing this, textual analysis is needed,³⁸ as well as an analysis of the origin and development of the stories in the research encounters. The form, the content and the encounter equally form the basis for narrative analysis. What is more, this had a connection to how I interpreted the widows’ accounts as ‘silent counter-narratives’. Counter-narratives is something I perceived as the person telling her own meaningful story through her own experiences, and how this is expressed. And to ‘silent’ I gave two meanings: it invokes ‘silent resistance’, and it concerns ‘being silenced’, not talked about. Most of the war widows’ stories are not created for the purpose of opposing anything, but they do this anyway, because they question the ‘ruling relations’ of both society and what is thought of as knowledge (Smith 1990a, pp. 11–16). However, these stories have remained untold, silent, until now. Some war widows have chosen to resist actively, for example in their letter-writing concerning their pension applications. However, even these counter-narratives have been made silent, since they have become part of the state’s records.

³⁸ Riessman (1993, p. vii) describes her return to what she had learnt about close textual analysis in literature after starting to engage with narrative analysis.

Andrews (2004, p. 5) states that the stories of individuals can challenge dominant discourses and describes these stories as “counter-narratives of gentle defiance and resistance”, which I find describes precisely the quality of the war widows’ stories. This is a matter of how they are told, but also what they are about, how they reflect the society, and what their consequences are. Rancière (2006, p. 39) refers to how the “fictions”, that is “[p]olitical statements and literary locutions produce effects in reality”. The war widows’ accounts offer new insight into violence and its aftermath. From my feminist viewpoint, I ask why the stories that the widowed women tell about their experiences in the world and in history should have stayed so ‘silent’ so far. I value these experiences, and not only in the sense of them providing information, but concerning and understanding them (Smith 1987, 1990a; Stanley 1993, p. 200). For example, in an interview situation, or when gathering research material in some other way, two people meet and have the chance of understanding something that they could not by themselves catch hold of. By telling her story, an interviewee produces it for herself, too, in the light of the moment of telling. The interviewer does not encounter only the story of the person she has been interviewing, but also her own, because it is only through her own experience, past and present, that she can work with the story that she has been party to being told.

In the terms of narrative analysis, my aim was to analyse my research encounters and experience together with the narrative structures of what was told, and so to place the focus on individuals who were sharing and passing on a story. This relationship of the stories, experience and encounters was also to be analysed as intersections in time and space, keeping in mind the fact that there were several phases in the research process and many encounters in time. Under these circumstances, I could analyse the widows’ accounts with all due respect to both their textual and their processual elements. This did not mean forcing a structure on them, but finding a structure, by experimenting with themes and staying in dialogue with the process of looking for the ‘narrativeness’ in them, the sense of what might have happened, of open ends, contingency, suspense, eventness and presentness (Morson 2003, pp. 1–10). These qualities are ones which Morson attaches to ‘process literature’, but life

stories too are process stories just as much as the examples from literature that Morson mentions. However, a narrative, ironically, is often seen as rendering order to the complexity of life. Therefore, Morson's idea of processuality is particularly applicable to the genre that the war widows produced, that of contingent war stories: giving into and allowing the complexity of such stories enables the perpetual movement that life produces to be grasped. I also draw on Hayden White (1987, p. 23), who, like Morson, is critical about 'narrativity' being understood as "well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see 'the end' in every beginning". He asks whether the world does not present itself to perception "in the forms that the annals and chronicle suggest, either as a mere sequence without beginning or end or as sequences of beginnings that only terminate and never conclude" (White 1981, p. 23).

In 'my narrative analysis', the emphasis is on the moment and process of knowledge production, and thus introducing and exploring the encounters is the starting point. This approach is a direct consequence of understanding the life histories as inherently and 'by nature' dialogical. Such a reading sees dialogue as both a quality of the material and as a means to produce knowledge, and this was already part of how I have understood autobiography as auto/biographical, concerning both the production and the analysis (Stanley 1992). This shows up right at the point that the material is originated, since all my research material is produced in a performative dialogue with the 'recipient', who is the researcher-I for the interviews, who is a jury of a writing competition for the Karelian life stories, and who is a state official for the war widows' assistance pension letters. The initial situation of its production includes and leads to a diversity of dialogical presences. Life history interviews are 'researcher-generated' and aim at some kind of a dialogue between the researcher and the subject. The outcome of this encounter can be auto/biographical, as is the case with my research on war widows. Furthermore, the auto/biographical accounts of war widows as well as the auto/biographical analytical presence of the researcher are both subjected to public commenting, adding perhaps new layers of auto/biographical understanding of the material. Eventually, this combination of different versions can be responded to through public comments, for example, after

articles are published or presentations given. This has often evoked a need for readers or listeners for my work to tell me something about their own lives, in connection with the war, memory, place, childhood, mothers, grandmothers, fathers, and so on. I have valued this kind of dialogue as also an inherent part of the research process, and it has informed my continuing process of analysis.

The Karelian life stories, autobiographies and biographies that are part of this study were by origin ‘publicity-aimed’, since they were written for a public cause, to convince and to show the writer’s skill in a Finnish writing competition, and it was also known to the writers that they would be stored in a public national archive. Consequently, for most of the writers the appreciation and reading of these stories was desired, and only a very small minority forbade the publication of their stories. The stories were written for a competition, but the writers knew that what was asked for were autobiographical or biographical accounts, adding a layer of ‘how I am’ to the presentation of ‘how my life has been’: my autobiography as a biography of me. Such a thing is obviously inherently dialogical. The war widow pension applications, however, were ‘process-originated’, because writing a letter explaining ‘a life’ was needed for the official procedure. A prompt answer was expected, but in many cases, especially when applying for a better pension, further explanations were required, and also the writer was subjected to exchanges concerning the validity of her presentation of her life situation. On these occasions, a dialogue with a state authority was started. This category of a letter exchange can be termed as ‘naturally-occurring’ narrative or autobiographical data. And although this was not required, such exchanges often became very personal expressions, in the form of hand-written notes and letters attached to the applications or sent separately. The meaning of all of these epistolary ‘life stories’ was to better explain the personal situation of the applicant, or to remind the state authority of the urgency of speedy decision-making. Even though they were a part of the official process for applying and were thus generated by a state authority and required for the official process, I regard these documents as ‘naturally-occurring’ in their quality as life stories since, beyond the task of clarification, they often expressed the needs and worries of the sender rather than just responded to the precise requirements of the authorities. In particular, the attached

and separately sent notes often revealed emotions of the moment of writing. All of the material is also strategic and performative, of course, as the widows' accounts pursue 'showing', 'naming', and 'being paid attention to'.³⁹

Thinking through the three genres I am working with, the research encounters, the Karelian life stories and the pension application letters, from the point of view of different dialogical presences expands and challenges the notion of a reflexive encounter. It shifts it beyond the original dichotomy, 'you/them' and 'I', of an interview and into a more diverse view of reading and interpretation of what goes on in a research encounter.

Re-presenting Time and Space

Penelope Lively's novel *Moon Tiger* was introduced at the start of this thesis. Lively (1991, p. 6) lets her protagonist Claudia think aloud about time and history: "History unravels; circumstances, following their natural inclination, prefer to remain ravelled." Later she returns to this issue: "In life as in history, the unexpected lies waiting, grinning from around corners. Only with hindsight are we wise enough about cause and effect" (Lively 1991, p. 28). Emile Durkheim (1966, pp. 117–119) [1938] writes, in a sociological framework, that there is no rectilinear causal link between a series of changes: what follows is not determined by what happened previously, their relation is chronological. In *Moon Tiger* Claudia thinks about history in terms of linearity and narrative:

"I shall omit the narrative. What I shall do is flesh it out; give it life and colour, add the screams and the rhetoric. Oh, I shan't spare them a thing. The question is, shall it or shall it not be linear history? I've always thought a kaleidoscopic view might be an interesting heresy. Shake the tube and see what comes out" (Lively 1991, p. 3).

³⁹ Stanley (2006) stresses how both researcher-generated and naturally-occurred material is performative (see also seminar background material for the Centre for Narrative and Auto/Biographical Studies at Edinburgh, NABS 2007).

In this thesis, time is understood from the viewpoint of how time is told, not as linear and in terms of longitudinal description. Buck-Morss (1989, p. 57) discusses how the three different stages of Walter Benjamin writing his *Passagen-Werk* were not developmental, not a sequence, ‘but an overlay of material and an overlapping of concerns’. Likewise, the three bodies of material for my study can be seen in this manner. They have been collected at different times, but each stage has meant an opening towards the next possible stage; they have not been ordered by each other, but they have made each other possible. Each stage also shares some common issues, and produces new ones. This is another reason for the allusion to narrative’s long exposure: both the production of the war widow stories and their examination in this research extend over a lengthy period of time, albeit not linearly, but criss-crossing the time in question from other times.

Perhaps more importantly, the name ‘Narrative’s long exposure’ is inspired by Walter Benjamin’s description of the long exposure required in early photography. This is a photographic term and refers to the long exposure time needed when the sensitivity to light of the plates used was still low, opposed to the digital snapshot of today, when a picture is taken on the spot of action, virtually without any delay. Benjamin describes the photographs I mentioned earlier by David Octavius Hill, a Scottish painter and early photographer, taken in Edinburgh Greyfriars Churchyard, and also refers to the long immobility needed of the people who were models as a reason for searching places for a quiet exposure. He comments that: “The procedure itself caused the models to live, not *out of* the instant, but *into* it; during the long exposure they grew, as it were, into the image” (Benjamin 1980, p. 204, original italics). A further reason for drawing on Benjamin is that I find his conclusion about the effect of a technical condition illuminating for my narrative project, pointing out that the chosen procedure influences both the process and the outcome.⁴⁰ Likewise, I have been thinking about how the research process affects handling the material, that is, interpreting and understanding it, and consequently how to analyse the essence of the stories that people tell about themselves and then communicate this to readers. In

⁴⁰ Trying out the possibilities of the calotype process was exactly what Hill, Adamson and their assistant Miss Mann excelled at (Stevenson 2002, p. 31).

this, the idea of long exposure and Benjamin's accompanying imagery is useful conveying the sense of what I am trying to do. To begin with, 'long exposure' expresses metaphorically the idea of the research proceeding in three stages over a many-layered period of time. During that process, I have experienced my 'subjects' growing into the research, their lives and experiences becoming barer, as if they were 'long exposed'. Thus temporal space is not just the space of telling the stories, as a narrative factor, but is also the temporal spaces of telling and doing research and the position and development of the characters and stories within that research space. Thinking about a photograph expresses this in a concrete and material manner, and I have in mind here the photograph of the seven young women in a meadow in Karelia (see 'Thought Zones'). That photograph gains weight as a starting point to a narrative of what possibly could have happened to these young women in their white blouses, as I have imagined five of them to be the possible 'younger selves' of the women I interviewed. The two remaining young women in the photo are my grandmother and her younger sister, whose lives are also intertwined in the research process. Furthermore, I do not only think of the figures of these women solely in terms of my interviews, but as having also given faces to the other two forms of autobiographical telling my thesis is concerned with. In this process of developing the narratives, the term long exposure well describes the 'slow take' involved.

A keen interest in the individual is what brings the long exposure of a photograph close to interviewing, both in relation to the process of producing the image, and with the engaging character of these forms of telling. Benjamin refers to the photograph of Elizabeth Johnstone Hall, a Newhaven fishwife photographed by Hill and Adamson, with the meaning of this particular image for my research discussed in 'Puzzles and Epiphanies'. I encountered the portrait of Elizabeth Johnstone Hall in my time, Benjamin in his (his essay was published in 1931), but we were drawn to the same things. We both admired the technical mastery of the portrait, as well as her composure, and how the whole seemed to express some powerful sense of existence. While looking at her portrait, Benjamin wrote that in photography one encounters something "strange and new, in that fishwife from Newhaven who looks at the ground with such relaxed and seductive shame something remains that does not

testify merely to the art of the photographer Hill, something that is not to be silenced, something demanding the name of the person who had lived then, who even now is still real and will never entirely perish into *art*” (Benjamin 1980, p. 202).⁴¹ He further discusses another photograph using the same technique, writing: “This most exact technique can give the presentation a magical value that a painted picture can never again possess for us. All the artistic preparations of the photographer and all the design in the positioning of his model to the contrary, the viewer feels an irresistible compulsion to seek the tiny spark of accident, the here and now” (Benjamin 1980, p. 202).

Price (1994, p. 92) refers to this quality as “explosive energies compressed in a photograph”, but argues against it having anything to do with the length of exposure time. She links it rather with the capturing of surface and the closure of a photographic frame. However, the time required for the exposure did contribute to the special inherent quality of, for example, the Edinburgh and Newhaven calotypes. First, quite concretely, the people being photographed were required to stay still for the time required. Besides having artists as models, Hill and Adamson also photographed people who were not used to acting as models, taking pictures of groups of people and of children. This needed patience from everybody and good social skills on the part of the photographer (Stevenson 2002, pp. 67–68, 114). Both the models and the photographer were on equal terms regarding the time needed, since they all had to wait. Taking a photograph was a mutual enterprise, then, it was not just about ‘being photographed’. This parallels interviewing people for a study, which is not the same as just going and asking them some questions, at least it is not if enough time is given to each interview and if the aim is to ‘know’, not just to gather one-dimensional information (Gorman & Hallman 2004, p. 37). In meeting

⁴¹ Benjamin names as one of the sources in his essay on photography Heinrich Schwarz’s (1931) study *David Octavius Hill, der Meister der Photographie*. The first photograph in Schwarz’s book is the portrait of Elizabeth Johnstone Hall, which he captions as ‘Fischweib aus Newhaven’. Hill captioned the portrait variously, with the proper name of his model, ‘A Newhaven Beauty’ or ‘It’s no fish ye’re buying, it’s men’s lives’ (Stevenson 2002, pp. 101, 108). If Benjamin did not have other sources than Schwarz on Hill’s work, he might not have known the name of Elizabeth Johnstone Hall, which perhaps shows in his usage of “that Fishwife from Newhaven” (Benjamin 1980, p. 204). However, he stressed that, due to the technically remarkable quality of the calotypes, they captured something essential of a person and had a lasting effect on the observer (Benjamin 1980, p. 202).

for a research interview, the ‘scene’ is shared, it requires co-operation from both the interviewee and the interviewer, a certain ability to communicate, and at least some empathy, again from both. Siegfried Kracauer (1980, p. 260) stresses that a photographer practises empathy, instead of a disengaged spontaneity. Using Hill and Adamson as his examples, he talks about selective engagement and how they brought out the essential features of any person they ‘took’. Here the photographer resembles “the imaginative reader intent on studying and deciphering an elusive text (Kracauer 1980, p. 260). Likewise, a researcher of autobiographical presentations also ‘brings out’ the essential features of the people in question.

Notwithstanding the usefulness of the idea of long exposure for my research, technically the content this had in early photography does not fully match my research on the war widows, which stretches over a substantially lengthy period of time, and over several encounters. What the precise exposure time for the calotypes was is not known, but with technical advances it was probably eventually down to about ten seconds (Stevenson 2002, pp. 57–59).⁴² In my research, the narrative of ‘war widowhood’ covers a period of over sixty years, told in sequences and from different angles in time and space. In consequence, perhaps a more suitable parallel is found in the work of a contemporary photographer, Michael Wesely, concerning how he highlights and visualises the time-space continuum in a way previously not practised or even imagined possible in photography (Lundström 2005, p. 21). In his up to two-year and multiple long exposures regarding construction work at the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin (1997–1999), Wesely used five camera positions, which enabled him to transform the chronological proceeding of the construction into one simultaneous action. In the final image, the surroundings before construction began to shine through the massive buildings and, moreover, all the work and billions of details over this two years period are layered onto the image. Everything can be seen at the same time, through houses that have turned translucent (Fuchs 2001, pp. 21–23). My layering of narrative transparencies resembles Wesely’s images, an idea which shows the process of the ongoing activity of memory, remembering, and the

⁴² Price (1994, p. 92) quotes Bunce (1973, p. 22) when she refers to the time needed for the Hill and Adamson calotype exposure as “the very long exposure of a minute and more”.

consequent adding on new material to the research. And at the end, the first fragment is still present, now as a part of a new constellation. In my research over the years, more details and new stories have been added on into the whole,⁴³ and in the moment of telling, the past shows in the frame of what is now, according to the angle at which and place where one stands. This applies not only to the three sets of research materials, but also to each of the composing individual stories as their development over time is followed, as I pointed out in commenting that the story of a photograph initiates an unfolding of separate stories. In the photographs by Wesely, the passing of time and changes in space are made visible through using the optical possibilities of the medium. In a narrative study, this is done through allowing voices to intermingle through the years. In both cases, the narrative of what happens is in a state of becoming; when the picture ‘is started’, it is not known how it will look in the end; the picture is in the making while being taken. In my research, time is extended from the time of war to a once-off interview set-up, then continues with interruptions for over five years, with continual insertions of new material from the archives and other sources on the research body. As a result, there are different types of encounters in time and space, whilst many strands and layers get condensed into individual encounters. These intersections are at the core of my analysis of the research materials.

The idea of condensed images is also found in psychoanalytic theory, also as combined with photography, as I was reminded after a conference presentation where I used transparencies to stack up material as a reference to the work of memory and telling a story (Loipponen 2002). Layering the transparencies demonstrated graphically how the different materials stratified to form a new constellation. This technique helped to show the similarities between the initial state of gathering research material, when every trace can lead to a discovery, and the

⁴³ I saw Wesely’s remarkable photographs for the first time in the Berlin Photography Festival, *After the Fact* (2006). After having drawn vertical and horizontal lines, nets, circles and loops to try to show how the encounters with the war widows take place in my study (and getting comments such as ‘that looks scary’), I was more than relieved to see that there is a process that produces the same effect, and, despite the fact that the process is complicated, many-layered, fragmented, and takes time, in the end a coherent if demanding image can be produced.

work of memory and interpretation. Freud uses the term ‘condensation’ to treat the latent and manifest content in dreams. A single image in a dream can work as a nodal point of intersecting chains of associations. This process carries both latent and manifest meaning and, when the latent elements have something in common and are brought together in the manifest dream as a unity or constellation, this is condensation. The dream-work produces condensed details that blur their contours, whilst elements of different contexts are piled upon each other. This blurred image Freud compares with the example of a photograph exposed several times (Sundholm 2003, pp. 30–31).⁴⁴ Concerning an evocative image discussed earlier – even when there is the simultaneously dim and dense image of a wall rug which carries many meanings, the point of origin for this is a concrete and material artefact. Also, the work which goes towards remembering it is practical and interpretative, whereas Freud does not engage in the interpretation of condensation. I write of what can be discerned as tangible layers of memory. In narrative studies, Mark Freeman (1998) has described narratives as emerging in dialogue with people, texts, and ‘contexts’, which I agree with. This takes place in a process where the ‘narrative unconscious’ is activated, for example, in Freeman’s (2002) case, him arriving in Berlin evoked memories he did not know he had. I also believe that the mind is ‘a meeting point of a wide range of structuring experiences’ (Harré and Gillett 1994, p. 22). Thinking of memory around the combined aspects of ‘the material and the unconscious’ is brought into practice when the concrete and unconscious traces of remembering are traced in the analysis of the research encounters. However, developing the unconscious and its interpretation in Freudian terms of would have required going into more depth on Freud’s ideas than is within the remit of this thesis.

This idea of the layering of transparencies is illuminative of what I was attempting to convey with the title of the thesis, ‘Telling Absence’. This ‘see-through’ format generously absorbed, and conversely also brought out, such details that were present

⁴⁴ John Sundholm uses the idea of condensation in his work on film history in the meaning of ‘condensed history’, as cinema studies have focused on condensation, that is, blurred images that call for interpretation, although Freud did not pursue interpretation of condensation. (Sundholm 2002, manuscript.)

only in their absence, like the absent men that the talk was still about, like my grandfather, whom I had only ever met as a photograph of a young handsome soldier on the wall. Those ‘absent’ were at the same time visibly ‘present’ in the representations of them, because through the stories of war widows certain absences were being told, and also some absences were ‘telling’ of what had not been told or at least not paid much attention to. Through the way that the thesis presents the gathered fragments, I am able to convey something of the meaning of telling these stories. Layering the transparencies with text or images is like filling in details into the frame of a structure that was there, some of it already covered, other parts of it in need of more work.

In the course of proceeding with this work, the transparency illustration was omitted, but the idea of the sedimentation stayed. Thematically, memory was always the constituent concept, and, in close association with memory, there was an emphasis also on time, because time is a key connecting factor that binds the three different bodies of research materials together. The following is an attempt to represent, stage by stage, how these three sets of material spread out in time and space. I have visualised the construction of the research as taking place from the bottom up, in the same way that a pattern instruction is followed when a wall rug is woven on a loom; ‘tying the knots’ of individual experience to the ‘warp yarns’ of time and memory, and weaving the ‘ground weft’ of everything that influences the story for a pattern in life to emerge. One of the many meaningful patterns in life, that is.

Table 1. Narrative’s long exposure

Lives told, time & memory				Encounters & writing			
Stage 3 Pensions letters	1939 – applications					2008– 2005–06	
Stage 2 Life stories	1939 –	1983–84 competition	1997–1998 competition		2004-05		
Stage 1 Interviews	1939 – everyday telling			2001 (2003)*	2004**	contacts	
		Individual experience	Social world		Research participation & reflection		

*The first interviews were conducted in 2001; after a break research work continued in 2003.

** Second interview with Kyllikki Iloranta.

This table shows how the temporal structure of the research has diagonally fanned out in two directions, and has also filled in, since the first interviews were conducted in 2001.

First, 'fanning out' here means that every new body of material has the quality of originating 'earlier' in time; earlier refers to time stretching back, from 2001 to war. In the final stage of gathering the research data, I came across pensions applications that were written during the first full month of the war, December 1939. This means that, from 2001, time opens up 'diagonally backwards' to include material that was produced from the very beginning of the war and before, and so is both a 'document of the present' and a 'remembrance of the past'. Second, in each stage of including more material, the focus has moved towards the ongoing moment, a different 'now' than in the previous stage, and also to the future. The research structure has thus also reached out 'diagonally onwards' from 2001 until the ongoing moment of analysis and writing. This again is a different 'now' than in the previous stage of analysis, as each stage of bringing in new material has also affected the interpretation of earlier material.

These two movements together produce a fan-shape of lives told and experiences shared in different encounters in time and space, something which becomes clear when the table is read from the first interviews in 2001 upwards and back and forth diagonally, so that the fanned-out triangle of times emerges as a pattern. The term 'filling in' here means that the new sequences of time have not only added dimensions to the presentations of the past, the present and the future separately in each case, but they have also made denser the presentation of time in all the stages. Each new insertion overlaps with what was gathered previously, and it also shows the earlier material in a new light, and vice versa. In the whole structure of the research, marking 1939 as the starting point for the war and 2001/2003 for the written research story is technically correct. However, as stories of lives, the research

material reaches both to a time before the war and also to the future, past the moment of telling, while in each stage the focus is on the successive present moments of telling and how those tellings unfold in their contexts.

This stress on the present is familiar from Ricoeur's analysis of time in Augustine's *Confessions*, to which he returns in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Ricoeur 2004), from its beginnings in the first volume of *Time and Narrative* (Ricoeur 1984). According to Ricoeur's reading of Augustine, there are three presents. This three-fold present is divided into the present of the past, which is memory; the present of the future, which is expectation; and the present of the present, which is intuition or attention (Ricoeur 2004, pp. 101, 347). Further, Ricoeur resists a retrospective orientation to historical knowledge when he, following Heidegger, promotes the idea of the 'inclusion of the futureness in the apprehension of the historical past' (Ricoeur 2004, p. 346). The present as the point of reference, with a strong emphasis on the future, is applicable also to my research on war widows. In all the stages of it, my interest is with each present moment of telling in its own specific context, with the 'how' of telling, how time is, and how telling can be approached from the perspective of now. The three-fold proposal of time and telling as present-past, present-present and present-future is visualized in Table 1, where each set of research materials is seen in the time context it was produced and also encountered in, that is in relation to the whole. The interviews in Stage 1 offer a version of the past filtered through the moment of the interview, and past the moment of telling, when the future is being speculated about. In Stage 2, the two moments of telling (the 1983–1984, and the 1997–1998, Karelian life stories) are pauses in the present of 'then' so as to look back, and they also extend to wondering about what lies ahead. Moreover, this material adds a new angle for inspecting the material gathered in the interviews. A lot of what is said in the interviews can be scrutinized through the present-present of the Karelian life stories, or indeed, through the three-fold present. This does not mean seeking for any kind of 'truth-value' in the earlier presentations compared with the later ones. The interest of doing this concerns the variation and similarity of presentation in different times, with the changing circumstances of telling and reception, and with possibly different goals of presenting one's life. As well as this

widened perspective on the interviews, the Karelian autobiographies and biographies are also read with knowledge of the interviews in mind. Furthermore, besides increased possibilities for interpreting the research materials, the research encounters as sites of producing knowledge also benefit from this exchange.

Stage 3 scatters the focus on all the years during and after the war, whenever new pensions applications were sent in. Thus the 'present-present' of producing the pensions material can be any year since 1939; in my research, this is 2003 which is the latest year of received applications in the files that I had access to (and also of course, past that year, because new applications are still sent in all the time). The 'present-present' of encountering this research could similarly be seen in relation to all the previous research encounters, from the perspective of this being the last stage of gathering material for my study. Since the material available for this last stage is so time-extensive, basically any year between the war and 2003, until my work in the archive and past it, to this moment of writing this now, could be the starting point of an analysis where all three bodies of research materials are explored. For each year, there is material concerning memory (present-past), expectation (present-future), and intuition (present-present). Each new angle also adds to interpretation. For example, in the pensions applications, life shows in the light on their contents that the applicants prefer to present; but in the Karelian life stories and in the interviews, any struggles they have with making pensions applications are not mentioned. What is told in the interviews and written in the life stories brings an altogether new focus on the lives of the applicants.

Time was the first such aspect in naming both the story and the encounter. Of course, analysing time belongs to narrative analysis per se (for example Fludernik 2003, pp. 120–121). However, thinking about time as a constituent of both the story and the encounter seems to me a new possibility. These effects are at least three-fold: a narrative is comprised of time and space; telling takes place in a certain place and time that will have an effect on the story; and finally encountering the story, whether this is a contemporary meeting at the time or a later one with the material, has its own effects. The encounter element, which I have emphasized the importance of, is

not always made explicit in definitions of narrative, although it is there when more closely examined. For example, Cobley (2001, pp. 236–237) does not mention an audience when he defines a narrative as a movement which involves the showing or telling of a story and its events. But implicitly an audience is there because he suggests that showing and telling as activities require a receiving end to them, although noting that people do not always have the possibility of telling their stories to somebody else:

“Narrative. A movement from a start point to an end point, with digressions, which involves the showing or the telling of story events. Narrative is a *re*-presentation of events and, chiefly, *re*-presents space and time” (Cobley 2001, pp. 236–237; original italics).

This movement with digressions, from certain points to other certain points (the relationship between start and end is not defined as a necessarily one-way movement), and its re-presentation of space and time, are at the core of the narrative analysis in my research. Concerning time, this movement is expressed in the web of polyphony of the above Table, where time is shown as a development viewed from diverse angles. Time refers to at least three trajectories: the vertical ‘long time’, the *durée* (Koselleck 2004) of the lives of people telling; it is also the time of telling; and the time of encountering what is told; and which later again expands in meaning once new material is included, this covering also the times of the previous set of stories. Space is not mentioned in the Table, and yet implicitly space is present since all the stories include space as a constituent of the story itself, as a space for telling, and then as the space of encountering the stories. The intersections of time, vertical, horizontal and diagonal, as well as space, are the nodal points where – to follow the weaving vocabulary introduced concerning the wall rug – the ‘piles’ are attached, with these representing ‘all’ that is involved in the encounter and in the analysis of that encounter. And both inner factors of the stories, and the outer condition for the analysis, time and space, need to be included in the discussion of long exposure.

A practical device for analysing narratives from the point of view of time and space is Bakhtin’s (1981, p. 84) idea of the *chronotope*, the configuration of time-space, meaning the inseparability of time and space:

“In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.”

Time is treated from the point of thickening and becoming visible in the Table. However, I also want to discuss the unity of time and space, as well as how space reacts to changes of the story in my research materials. Before this, however, I want to make some clarifications concerning Bakhtin’s references to literature, and how this compares with the autobiographical character of research data. Albeit not seen by their authors nor approached by me as fictional expressions, the life stories written for the writing competitions, and even the explanations provided in the pensions applications, are still quite close to well-written stories, when it comes to considering their structure and their use of rhetoric. Conceptually, Holquist (2002, p. 111) argues that Bakhtin’s dialogism, with the chronotope being one of its components, can be applied beyond literature and proposes that the chronotope could be a means to “explore the complex, indirect, and always mediated relation between art and life”. He bases this on Bakhtin’s (1981, p. 253) formulation of how the reflected and created chronotopes emerge “out of the actual chronotopes of our world”. Again, the aim of my work is not to explore the similarities or distinctions between life and art. However, this notion of the chronotope is interesting in the light of what I wrote earlier about my wavering over how to define my material and what could be ‘rightly’ called narrative when it comes to considering autobiographical accounts. The chronotope is particularly suitable for the kind of parallelism of the reflexive encounters and linking this with the chosen themes in the narratives. Indeed, when Bakhtin (1981, p. 85) writes how the image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic, I believe that so too are human encounters. Bakhtin (1981, pp. 97, 98–99) also specifies meeting as a central and indeed universal motif in literature but also in other areas of life. In the motif of a meeting, time and space are inseparable.

Chronotopic Home

How then does space become charged and responsive to movements of time, regarding the encounters with the war widows and concerning their autobiographical accounts? Skultans (1998, pp. 30–32, 83–89) finds a common pastoral theme in the stories of the Latvians that she interviewed, drawing on Bakhtin's idyllic and adventure chronotopes to describe the unity of time and space in the Latvian pastoral idyll. Its important constituents are the farmstead, the forest, family and childhood, all an integral part of the Latvian past. For example, the forest figures in Latvian literature and folklore, as well as in primary school textbooks, and forms a part of every child's basic education. In the interviews, farmstead and forest descriptions demonstrate a sense of shared experience and shared understanding with the interviewer (Skultans herself). As this theme is connected with happiness and a good life, disruptions are brought up in the narratives of the Latvian interviewees, as well. In times of unrest, the idyllic structures are ruptured and the unity of time and space breaks down. In this way, the chronotope of the pastoral idyll responds to movements and changes in history as told by the interviewees, so that in general the pastoral scene concentrates what is lost, longed for and what stands for Latvia over time, and it concerns changes in time.

In the war stories of the exiled Karelian war widows I interviewed, stories of home form a uniting theme. Home as a chronotope combines time and space. However, as time and space can be united, so their being in accord with each other can also be broken. A war starts and intrudes, and the continuity of time is fractured, and space is lost, as well as people. Such a tragedy leads to a lifelong struggle to establish a new unity of time and space, a new home. In my research materials, home is understood broadly as covering various meanings, including Karelia. Home also means the 'loss of land', both specifically, concerning losing a plot in a named place, and generally, concerning the experience of having to leave, when people are forced to depart and settle elsewhere. Having to leave 'home' is the point of departure in telling about one's life as an exiled war widow. Home is a concrete dwelling place, as well as the

familiar mental and social environment. The loss of this home as a part of one's daily existence is intertwined with the loss of a husband: the past as well as the future together with this man, in this family constellation, is lost. Everything in the war widows' stories is told from the perspective of the loss of the original home and its security, of a family sharing a life. This shifts into living in other people's homes, which is described as the most difficult experience of being exiled, followed by looking for a new home, moving several times, building a house, settling down, taking care of the home, bringing up children and how that is arranged often with their mothers living in the homes of these widowed daughters, the children leaving home and building their own homes with their own families, and then finally the arrangements concerning home in old age.

Furthermore, for the Karelians, home is also the place of origin, in the sense of roots. After the war, Karelians were not just defined as Finns but as Karelians, coming from this place called Karelia, being Karelian. In this context of origin, Karelia resonates with the idea of the original home, the '*ur*-place' of even the nation, as Karelia is also what is called Old Finland. Some sense of what it is to be a Finn is charged by the loss of Karelia, albeit that this is simultaneously complicated by Karelia and Karelians being seen as to an extent influenced by what is Russian, even Eastern (Komulainen & Gordon 2007, pp. 165–167). The meaning of Karelia as the original home is heightened by Karelia as the surroundings and theme in the *Kalevala*, the national epic. Such an image not only appears fortified in Finnish literary representations of Karelia: the important Swedish novelist and poet Harry Martinson in *Aniara* (1956) chooses 'Karelia', the only concretely named place in his book, as the original and lost home, the place that the crew of the space ship *Aniara* longs for, yet without hope of returning. This Karelia appears a wonderful place in *The Song for Karelia*: "Fairest, though, among fair glimpses comes the vision of Karelia, / like a lake agleam through branches, like a lustrous lake in summer (...)" (Martinson 1991, p. 118). There is no explanation given to Karelia by Martinson in his *Aniara* (Martinson 1974) but in 'Notes' to the English translation the meaning of Karelia is explained as "Formerly an eastern district of Finland, but now incorporated into the Soviet Union. As the scene of the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*, and

imbued with exoticism deriving from Russian and Byzantine sources, Karelia stands for an irrecoverable paradisiac heartland” (Klass & Sjöberg 1991, p. 167). In this symbolic context, Karelia illustrates the idea of harmonious nature, ‘land’ and the known, as opposites to a void, space and the unknown (Sihvo 2003, pp. 402–403). I shall return to these meanings when analysing the research encounters and other research materials, and explore this idea of home to illuminate its many-sidedness as a chronotope in the accounts of the war widows.

Home not only condenses many strands in the stories of those widows who left Karelia, but it is also brought up as topic or issue in the majority of the pension applications by all kinds of applicants. Managing to keep up a home economically was a worry for all the widows equally, because being the sole caretaker of the family set the terms for living. In this sense, the widowed women from Karelia did not stand out from the rest, as they did not appeal to their loss of home as a reason for their application. It could not be this officially, of course, but I sometimes happened that the local officials giving their statement to the state officials pointed out the fact of the applicant’s loss of home and fortune in the evacuations, while a widow from another area could express in her application that she had “the same kind of fate as the Karelians” (File 55, p. 32), referring to losing her home, in this case due to her husband’s death. Consequently, home as a chronotope functions beyond the evacuation stories. Indeed, it serves as an overarching chronotope for all the material dealt with in my research, including by providing a linking factor for analysing the encounters and the stories. This is because it is not only a constituent in the stories, but also plays a key role in their and my approaches to analysing the research materials. Home is the intersection at which these different encounters take place. Home is the place for interviewing. In the meaning it has concerning the researcher’s childhood home, it is a personal memory charger and thus has another relevance for analysing the research encounters. I could not enter the homes of any of the widows without thinking of where I come from. And, since I had that in mind, coming into the homes of these women was also of particular importance: I did not just enter somewhere, anywhere, but, by going behind the doors into these private homes, memories of my own past were strongly and immediately evoked. Visiting

them was in a way going back to the life that I had known, not for the purpose of finding replicas or simulacra, but being curious to explore whether my memories did in fact resonate with the material realities of these homes. All these newly experienced homes were combined and layered in my mind with the palimpsest of my grandmother's home that already existed in my body, memory and imagination (Troy 1999, pp. 181, 190–193).

As well as home in a concrete manner intersecting various personal and familiar experiences and historical events, home also represents a connection to a women's community, which in my research is understood in terms of 'women's houses'. Everything takes place in a certain place at a certain time, meaning that these 'houses' are the concrete dwelling places of the women that I interviewed and my own childhood home. Nonetheless, the meaning of women's houses reaches over from a definition of a home and a house as a place, to a house as a mental environment, in the sense of a way of being in this world. What makes these spaces women's houses is the fact that they were occupied by generations of women. These women's communities were formed because of the absence of the men who died in the war. War is the common denominator for this situation in my research, but there can be similar communities of women that have been created because of other reasons for men's absence, such as poverty, migration and the kinds of work they do.⁴⁵ All these circumstances can continue over generations, and war always has these effects: when a husband dies in a war, the children not only lose a father, but also a grandfather for their children. Men as partners, husbands, fathers, grandfathers, are longed for in these houses, but they are not available. Because they are not there, women do everything themselves and teach the younger and future generations to operate accordingly. The consecutive generations learn to look up to a woman as the head of the house, which, in a basically patriarchal society, is a silent counter-narrative created by its own force. There are men, as sons, sons-in-law and

⁴⁵ A particular source of inspiration for thinking about the context of 'women's houses' and 'women's communities' has been the poetry of Rosalía de Castro, a poet from Galicia in Spain, where men went overseas and migrated, and the women stayed and became the "widows of the living and death" (Castro 2003 [1880], pp. 228–231). Castro is concerned with the problems of Galician women: emigration, loneliness, disillusion, crop failure, rising prices, hunger, and old age (Davies 1998, p. 71).

brothers; but in the family portraits, the central figure is a woman. I want first to return to the idea of 'silent counter-narratives' introduced earlier at this point. My research data suggests that when a man dies in a war, this does not just create a temporary women's community, but a more lasting construction, here described using the term women's houses. These communities function within society, but they do so without the usual male-headed structure, and manage to do so, both mentally and also and importantly economically, with one caretaker in the family. Hence the connotation of the 'house', not only the home. These are single parent units and 'houses' of two or three generations and demand a tremendous work load. Women here are not only creating a 'nest', but are the providers as well as managers of the terms of living, with managing here in most cases meaning a very meagre standard of living. The stories of widowed women are silent counter-narratives I think in two ways. First, they are produced around difference to the dominant narratives, but they do so in silence, without an intention to oppose. These widowed women do not choose to resist through their example the dominant narratives for the situation is created, indeed determined, by the contingencies of war alone. However, through the situation is unavoidable, just to carry necessitates a certain amount of spirit. Indeed, Molly Andrews's (2004, p. 5) idea of counter-narratives, mentioned earlier, as "gentle defiance and resistance" is correct here. Second, these are unrecognized stories of coping and recreating a life. If they were conceptualized as solving the social and economic consequences of war, they might gain a different aura and become more 'heroic', and, more visible. Under scrutiny, then, in my thesis are the possible ontological and epistemological repercussions of these silent counter-narratives and how they might be explored through women's ways of telling about their lives.

Women's houses provide a physical and mental context; they also signify an effort together, a gathering, a sense of community. This further develops an important theme in this research, that of the research encounter, in the sense that these encounters both produce knowledge of this one particular encounter and the effects of losses being told, and are also a means to participate in a community of women that is the source of knowledge. This involves passing information from generation

to generation orally, and in this manner it is embodied in sharing together (Gilbert, 2001, pp. 569, 573). It also involves women producing their own culture together, as found in such things as the Finnish laments and folk poetry, and it has been explored in Finnish folklore research by Aili Nenola (1982, 1986, 2002) and others. Nenola's early studies show that laments were important to women's culture because, although a culture of suffering, women were the agents in this tradition of their own creation. Leea Virtanen (1983, 1994) and Senni Timonen (2004, p. 20) to have written of women as active producers of their culture, while Satu Apo (1989, p. 177) finds this speaking of the common experiences of women as a link in a chain of knowledge creation occurring across many generations of women. The communality of women in my research is expressed in the talk about the war and its effects, and is seldom discussed as being on equal terms with the experiences of men during the war. For these women, it has been in the context of my research that they have talked about their experiences as widowed refugee women with the aim of this becoming public knowledge, as if they were performing a lament that is meant to be heard by all in the community, sung together with other women. In all the stages of my research, additional voices to those of the widows are also heard, with this too contributing to the sense of a larger community of women participating in telling war, the diverse voices from my pre-interviews; the life stories written by Karelians generally, not just the widows; the pension applications written by all the many applicants. Home and thus the everyday are the natural environments for such exchanges, because home is the meeting point for, and home and everyday activities are also the contents of the talk of, the stories collected in this research.

One aspect of this approach to history as something which is not just written, but also shared in talk in women's houses, is to understand the stories told in my research as counter-narratives. In women's oral poetry, the felt communality was a matter of joining a long established tradition. It was known that these were the matters of women, had been, will continue to be: to be a widow, to be the wife of a deceased man, to be a daughter-in-law in a house where the keys stayed in the pocket of the husband's mother. This tradition also protected the singer. Nobody could claim the song was naming the mother-in-law of this one particular singer, since traditionally

mothers-in-law were referred to as hostile towards the wives of their sons (Apo 1989, p. 177). These oral poems were also counter-verses, in terms of expressing women's own thoughts about matters that could be publicly stated only in this song form. The same I think applies to the stories of the Karelian war widows: they are counter-narratives in the way that they articulate women's own experiences of war, not as conveyed in male-centred presentations of war. What is more, their 'counter' quality is accentuated by the fact that they cannot lean on a tradition, since they necessarily create their own tradition of widows' war stories. They also contradict the usual content given to 'war stories', because while they do describe the war time events, they concentrate on life after the war. In these war stories, war's effects are the war, the effects found in the sphere of home and the everyday, and then this everyday stretching out until the present moment.

Approaching women's experiences and stories of war from the standpoint of counter-narratives shared in the present brings the discussion back to the theme of time, as well as to that of the research encounter. Elisabeth Grosz (1995, p. 100) does not use the term counter-narrative, but she argues that the traditional, as well as the later, post-Euclidean and post-Newtonian conceptions of space and time have not been able to respond to the need to create maps and models of space and time based on women's experiences. She does not propose what a space-time framework appropriate to women might be, but instead suggests that "the bodies of each sex need to be accorded the possibility of a different space-time framework" (Grosz 1995, p. 100). Following this, Grosz (1995, pp. 100–101) calls for serious revision of the overarching context of space-time and stresses that she prefers this order over Bakhtin's time-space, because her revision takes account of how bodies function and are conceived, which necessarily affect the nature of ontological commitments and the ways in which subjects (masculine as well as feminine) see themselves and are socially inscribed. Julia Kristeva too has insisted on the difference between sexes in relation to time and described women's time as cyclical and monumental and opposed to the 'time of history' in her presentation of "Women's Time" (1986, pp. 190–193) [1979]. Giorgio Agamben (2007, pp. 111, 114–115) has adopted what might be a unifying approach here, when he names 'pleasure' as an experience which

a new concept of time could be founded around. Instead of line and point as indicators of time, a more whole and complete sense of time would be the result. And as the site of pleasure, Agamben links this with the concept of *cáiros* [kairos, see Lndroos, 1998, pp.43-6], an abrupt and full moment of everything coming together. On this, he writes that:

“For history is not, as the dominant ideology would have it, man’s servitude to continuous linear time, but man’s liberation from it: the time of history and the *cáiros* in which man, by his initiative, grasps favourable opportunity and chooses his own freedom in the moment. Just as the full, discontinuous, finite and complete time of pleasure must be set against the empty, continuous and infinite time of vulgar historicism, so the chronological time of pseudo-history must be opposed by the cairological time of authentic history” (Agamben 2007, p. 115).

In my research, telling is proposed as the central site for Groszian embodied space-time and Agambean history-as-pleasure. In telling, time stops, chronology stops, and there is the moment of telling and the encounter between two experiencing bodies, either person to person, or else via another type of a contact, such as for example in reading. Accordingly, this is the approach which is applied in my analysis: reading with pleasure, emphasizing the potential of the encounter. And it is to a detailed discussion of the interview encounters that I now turn.

Image 3. The Karelian Isthmus 1939



Chapter 4. Five Encounters

Introduction

In this part of my thesis, I concentrate on presenting, discussing and analysing the five interview encounters. An encounter is understood as coming together of two persons and their active co-presence for the purpose of focused interaction (Goffman 1961). An interview is regarded an observational encounter interpreted dialogically and polyphonically (Denzin 2001, pp. 128–133). The analysis of each interview is divided into three sections. The first section is about the interview situation, preparing for the meeting and the practicalities of building a connection with each of the women I interviewed, followed by introducing the character of the encounter. Each interview took off in a special way which very much created the terms of exchange. The second section presents what the interviewed woman concentrated on in her telling. The third section is about analysing what was told. This is done through the analytical themes that have arisen from the interviews and the material as a whole, including loss, getting on with loss, war commemoration, memory in general, time, and self-reflection.

The approach I have used in reading the interviews is a narrative one in at least four ways. Firstly, the starting point is narrative in the sense that the interview sessions could mostly be described as story-telling sessions, although with variations. Secondly, the women I interviewed mostly create meaning to their losses through describing the events in their lives in narrative form as stories (Riessman 1990). Thirdly, the epistemological ground is narrative in the sense that the women I interviewed remember and recount their lives as stories. Fourthly, the researcher-I constructs each woman's story in my interpretation and analysis of this telling, using it explicitly as a method of analysis in this work as well as implicitly elsewhere in the thesis. Theoretical work is no less a constructed story than the war widows' talk and its telling.

The exact questions that are asked in connection with the interviews in what follows are:

- * What happens before the actual interview situation?
- * What happens in the encounter; what stays in mind and in body?
- * What are the things the women I interviewed most talked about?
- * How do I interpret what was told in the light of the theoretical and methodological thoughts that I have about the subject?
- * How does this all link together with what the other war widows say in the interviews and with the research project as a whole, especially concerning the analytical themes that arise, those of loss and getting on with loss, war's effects, war commemoration and the dead husband remembered in various ways, memory, time and self-reflection?

The five women that I interviewed are Bertta Kaukinen, Kyllikki Iloranta, Sylvi Ahola, Helmi Parikka and Eeva-Liisa Rötö. These are pseudonyms. However, instead of choosing randomly the cover names for my interviewees, I have used names that I can relate to through my background. They are combinations of family names with names that could come from my grandmother's village in Karelia. A photograph of seven women and one child has been presented earlier in this thesis; besides grandma and her sister, there are friends and relatives from the village, and the child could be my father. I think I have seen at least one of these women in one of the few photographs my grandmother left behind, but more precisely that this I do not know them. Nevertheless, I have started to think of them as the five women I interviewed, or their younger selves. They are not, of course, in any literal way, but this mental and concrete image has helped me in my work, since – they could be. Maybe these five women, as I know for sure that my grandma did, lost their husbands and became war widows; this is as likely a possibility as anything else when it comes to war. This image of five women is a tangible reminder of the fact that there are no anonymous people who bear the consequences of wars. The people in the images from anywhere in the war zones do not become less real because of us not knowing their exact names. It is the friends of my grandma, relatives and

friends from the village, people she went to school with; or, my friends, your friends, our friends; there is always somebody for whom this person matters profoundly. Tales of war are always tales of concrete people who can be localized and named.

If the interviews are my main source of information, why should each one of them be treated as an entity of its own? Pertti Alasuutari (1994, p. 262) refers to stylistic difficulties when trying to fit people's everyday talk into a research text and comments that citations should be used the same way that writers use the dialogue: as a part of the narration. This is the crux of the matter. The writer's narration is the literary text he is writing, the researcher's narration is the research text under construction. If these include talk, telling, called dialogue or interview excerpts, then it needs to be a part of the narration. And each aspect of each interview encounter needs to be seen in its own right, rather than a rush to homogenise and generalise.

Choosing to Interview

My choice to interview in my research was influenced by a sense of the timing involved, in particular my awareness of the widows of WW2 being of an age cohort. They had the personal experience of a country in war and after the war that nobody else had, and I felt strongly that their stories needed to be collected before it was too late, otherwise this information would not be available, would vanish for ever. The easiest and fastest way of securing this seemed to be by interviewing some of them. By 'easy' here I am referring to my having some experience of interviewing in journalistic work, and so thinking that I could manage to conduct an interview with them. Interviewing was the way I had previously used to find out about people and phenomena, and so, if I wanted to write about what the women who were evacuated from Karelia as young adults would say about their lives as war widows in post-war time, then I could go to them and ask. The stress was on 'what they would say' even at this initial stage. Based on my experience as a journalist, I knew that people will generally tell about their lives if they are asked, but that they select what they say, which is sometimes more than what is asked for, and sometimes less.

Arguing that now was the last possible moment to collect the war widows' stories did not always convince the people that I contacted. When I was looking for women to participate and phoned the telephone numbers that were recommended to me, there were women who did not see any use in talking about times that for them were long ago, and Saarenheimo (1997, p. 208) has pointed out that not all elderly people want to reminisce about the past. Occasionally I was given the phone number of a daughter rather than a war widow herself, and in such cases age and condition were routinely named as reasons for the mother not wanting to be involved. This was of course understandable, but still I would have preferred to ask the woman herself. When I inquired about this possibility, it was usually denied to me. This could have been for the sake of mother and her condition, but in some cases the conversation was ended with my being unsure whether it was the mother or the daughter who had refused the interview. This 'daughter as gate-keeper' problematic extended also somewhat to the interviews that I did manage to conduct. For instance, one of the women agreed to the interview because of her daughter having earlier participated in a book for war orphans, and she felt that it was now possible for her to talk, because she did not have to be cautious for her daughter's sake anymore. Another woman had told her daughters about the interview and discussed with them whether they thought it suitable for her to be involved; and in this case, the daughters encouraged their mother to take part. They also started to tell their mother about their own memories, some of which the mother herself did not know anything about, for example, about the daughters having been teased in school because of being Karelians (something that is often referred to in the Karelian life stories). She was amazed at them having kept such information from her, which they had done in order not to burden their mother with more worries. And this led to a discussion with me about the necessity of telling these stories.

Additionally, I had also my personal agenda in wanting to interview, as well as to start this without delay. As previously explained, my research project had started with questions concerning loss and its consequences, and soon the particular case of loss turned out to be war, with the focus on war widows. One result of this was that it turned my gaze towards near history, more precisely towards comprehending that my

grandmother was also a war widow. This was something that I had not thought about before (what grandchild would?), and so I had never asked her about this part of her life, or at least, I did not remember asking. Consequently, interviewing war widows seemed to offer the chance that I had missed while my grandmother was still alive. If I did not now manage to gather the stories of war widowhood before their tellers vanished, then I would not have a third chance. As noted earlier, I started by interviewing my grandmother's niece (see 'Grandmother's Wall Rug and Participatory Memory Work') and I also learnt a lot about my grandmother from her nephew during our trip to the Karelian Isthmus to the old 'family village' there (see 'Thought Zones'), a trip which took place after I had done three of the main interviews and had two left.

This sense of general and personal gaps and the pressing need to fill them made the idea of research all the more appealing, and it also influenced the interviews in many ways. The main reason for the research was to ask questions about the life of the interviewees, but I also looked forward to being in their company for my own sake. I was curious about them as women who could tell something that I could perhaps recognize, or would not know, or would not know knowing, the type of knowing referred to as tacit (Polanyi 1983, pp. 3–25). I hoped to be able to discern the meaning of what was said in the interviews partly through my own background, simultaneously discovering this background for myself. Consequently, I was eager to find out about the homes of the women interviewed, the sounds and smells there, as well as the way they spoke, their gestures and their voices. When the interviews started, I was happy about every familiar or new discovery that I made in their speech or in the surroundings. Besides this concrete observational level, I was also bodily involved in the interviews. Even looking for the address where each of the women lived was a part of this process. First there was a period of near-panic, thinking that I would not arrive on time, that I would lose this chance. This changed rapidly into physical comfort, once I was inside their homes. I experienced this as a sense of returning to a familiar and safe environment, even when these homes were mostly situated in geographically new locations for me. Listening was also a many-layered process. Partly I was listening to the descriptions of how things in their lives

were arranged by each of the women in question and thereby gaining knowledge on the theme of war widowhood. And partly I was also enjoying the conversations in the form of learning for myself.

This was a double-edge role. I was the expert researcher who was posing the questions, and I was also the one who was there to learn matters about a woman's life. Similarly Latvala (2005, pp. 251–254) describes understanding how much she had learnt during the sessions with her interviewees, whose wisdom and patience she admired, to the point of seeing some of the older women as mother figures. For Latvala, and for me, the encounter with a person who was more experienced than oneself was seen as profitable for one's own development. Consequently, when I was asked about my research by other people, I was always surprised to hear disparaging comments about age, and comments such as “are there still war widows alive” and “oh, they must be very old”, suggesting that the old could not talk about the past sensibly anymore. The women I interviewed were only about twenty years of age, when the war broke out, and so in their eighties when being interviewed sixty years after the war had chronologically ended. In the interview situations, these women were extremely energetic and in charge, and if somebody was exhausted after the long interview sessions, it was me and not them.⁴⁶

At the start, I used a combination of open-ended questions and semi-standardized focused thematic interview (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, p. 45, pp. 46–48; Eskola & Suoranta 1998, pp. 86–87; Wengraf 2001, p. 5), in relation to which I had chosen topics that seemed relevant for finding out about the life of a widowed Karelian evacuee and her family (Heikkinen 2005, pp.270-1). A two-page list of topics to ask about resulted, with relatively few ready-made questions, and considerable space to follow the lead of the interviewees in what was talked about. In consequence, the frame was constantly revised during the interview sessions and new questions were added. In designing my inquiry, I was much aided by the two pre-interviews I did with Kaarina Rouhiainen (Rouhiainen 4.3. 2001) and Kerttu Kiljunen (Kiljunen 10.3.

⁴⁶ Similarly Lumme-Sandt (2005, p. 133) and Kaufman (1994) write how the so-called old often surprise interviewers with an endurance that may exceed the interviewer's capacity.

2001), who were not war widows, but who contacted me when they had read the leaflets that I delivered to some Karelian clubs in my hometown of Lahti. They had both reacted to the word ‘survivor’ in my call, since they had been evacuated from Karelia as young girls with their families and felt that despite the trouble in their life they had still managed well. Both phone calls lasted for nearly an hour and then both interviews took three hours. Their stories were extremely interesting, they were both superb tellers and I enjoyed the atmosphere of good and exciting story-telling. The atmosphere was warm and generous in other ways, too; for example, when I entered Kaarina Rouhianen’s apartment she handed me a pair of woollen socks to wear for she found the floors very draughty. Furthermore, I learnt from them a vocabulary that I was able to use in formulating my interview questions. Their talk also gave me some advice on what to think of as possible thematic fields in the interviews and to prepare questions, for example, on school, education, work, career, and settling into the new society. The later interviews were influenced by Kaarina Rouhiainen and Kerttu Kiljunen both starting by telling about their flight from home and the time of being evacuated, which obviously was not surprising as such, but it caught my attention since they had read in the leaflet (Loipponen 2001a, Appendix 1) that I was interested in post-war time and reconstruction. I would have tried to start with ‘post-war’ in the main interviews, had I not learned to expect the interviews to start with wartime experiences, as indeed turned out to be the case. Most importantly, through the talk with Kaarina Rouhiainen and Kerttu Kiljunen I gained some sense of what it means to leave and to settle in a new place and was perhaps a little better equipped for the main interviews. In looking at the development of my research design, many of the subjects and their formulation show that I had used the experience that I had had in the previous meetings. For example, one of the questions was about the changes in roles that the women had experienced, and I referred to how a woman in one of the pilot interviews had described the shifts in her life.

The frame of the interview was oriented for events and behaviours and at first only a few questions were asked about feelings, such as whether there were feelings of hope or hopelessness. However, during the interviews, these matters were talked about and questions about ‘loneliness’, ‘joy’ and ‘sorrow’ were added accordingly. One

particular area was deliberately left out: I did not think that I could ask the women concerned any questions about sexuality, although one of the issues I had thought a lot about was how a young woman widowed and perhaps staying a widow would feel about this. I considered that such questions were not possible to ask when I first met someone, especially when these were elderly women. However, my reserve was perhaps unwarranted, for while I was drafting an early chapter, a book based on short interviews with war widows was published by a man who had worked as a Dean in the parish where he interviewed (Himanka 2004). One of his questions to the widows was: “Erkki Kujala encouraged me to ask: How did you feel about the tenderness of your husband ceasing?” (Himanka 2004, pp. 37, 45, 55). He named this other researcher as his authority for asking this, and obviously he knew the people in his Deanery quite well, but still I think he showed that I had been over-cautious about the ability of my interviewees to respond to a similar question. His interviewees did not shun his question: some of them laughed a little, but all of them had answered. They said that it was terrible to lose a husband, since they were still young and starting their lives and most of them had had very little time together (Himanka 2004, pp. 37, 45, 55).

Kvale (1996, p. 132) supports the idea of paying attention to the dynamic and thematic aspects of interview questions, but also to keep in mind in the later analysis why the questions were made as they were. I knew why I was asking, but I did not have a totally clear structure for the analysis in mind before the interviews and ended up being insecure with how to continue with the material. Silverman (1993, p. 10) writes that in life story interviews, and Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi (2005, p. 191) comment that in narrative interviews, people can be asked to ‘tell your story’. I was more journalistically oriented to assisting the women I interviewed to tell their stories and asked more questions (Kvale 1996, pp. 271–272). However, the women themselves managed to provide stories, even with my interruptions. Eventually, the analysis of the interviews found the above presented three-part form, which emphasized the processual character of my whole study.

Bertta Kaukinen**First encounter: scare and connections**

The first war widow I interviewed for this study is Bertta Kaukinen. I got to know about her through an acquaintance of a relative. This was by chance, as the contact I had with my relative and his acquaintance was for another purpose. My grandmother's nephew, referred to as my father's cousin, whom I had earlier asked for information concerning my grandmother, phoned me about a trip to Karelia organised by the local *Kauniskangas-society* [a pseudonym], representing the village in Karelia that was my grandmother's home village. This was a part of the research project that was a benefit to me on a personal level: the ties to the extended family from my father's side strengthened during the process. He had earlier on the phone talked about his own trips back to his family home, and I had asked him to tell me about the upcoming possibilities. These 'home region trips' were extremely popular amongst first and consecutive generations of Karelians, but I had not been on one before. By taking a trip back to my grandmother's and father's home village, I thought that I would gain in understanding about my subject-matter.

Earlier I had only travelled through Karelia, by train on the way to Leningrad (as it was then) and to Moscow, and seen the landscape from the train window. I had been closer to being on former Finnish territory while on the trains that stopped at the Vyborg railway station, where there was the chance to change money.

Viipuri/Vyborg was the second largest station in Finland before the wars, also all the freight traffic started off from there (Hirn & Lankinen 2000, p. 38). Through train or bus trips through the area, Karelia stayed close until the early 1990s; although illegal trips were known to be taken. The Finnish past was not really evident in the Soviet-style railway atmosphere (Raivo 2004, p.64), and thus my visual understanding of Karjala/Karelia was meagre. Consequently, I had grown curious, and the thought of taking this chance to travel there felt exciting and necessary, too, especially since it was to go to the places that my relatives had left behind. Altogether the timing was good, in particular when thinking of my research. I phoned immediately to the person

in charge of organizing the trip. And the same feeling of the project being beneficial beyond being a scientific exploration repeated itself, when the woman concerned said she had known my grandmother. She lived in the same city as I, and because of this her comment felt rather striking. It was the first time that somebody had commented on my origins from my father's side. My grandma and her extended family had all lived in the countryside, and as a family we commuted between these two equal poles of existence, the city and the country, all the way through my childhood; and yet the people in these two places were not the same and there was an invisible wall between them. This was something that I understood only when she mentioned my grandma in a new context to me. Suddenly the city enlarged slightly. Later I learnt that the Karelian village where my grandma originated was not particularly big, and mostly all the people knew each in one way or another; and many were distant relatives, because of marriages taking place between villagers from different houses (these families are presented in Kaukinen 2002, pp. 408–480). For this group, our family was a natural part of the 'diaspora' community that had spread out into other parts of Finland, after the war ended the close community that had lived for centuries on the Karelian Isthmus. They knew us even when we did not know them; I had been surrounded by them in the city, but I would not have known about this community had in a way re-formed unless I had started the research project. A month after this phone conversation, with yet another group but from the same village, I stepped into the minibus that would take us over the border to the places where my family came from. I was greeted in a self-evident manner as a member, and everybody talked of 'your grandmother' since everybody had known her. This felt both baffling and also as joyous as the first time when it had occurred, during the exchange on the phone with the Kauniskangas-society organizer.

My own research interest came up in our discussion as well, and as a natural continuation of her mentioning one important name. I inquired, as I did with nearly everybody that I met with around that time, if she knew any war widows. To my delight, she named a relative of hers that was a war widow from the same area as my grandmother, and who might be willing to participate in the study. This felt like a remarkable coincidence. Of all the potential places in Karelia, the first interviewee

might be from this special village. It was clear that my research project had connections to my personal history, but I had not thought about these links realizing themselves other than through family history and personal memories; my aim was to listen to other people. Now the project seemed to be going in the direction of involving people who not only had their own memories to contribute, but who could share my memories and deepen them, and pull them into the research itself.

There was only one problem. If I did get in touch with Bertta Kaukinen, I could not tell her who had told me about her. These two women were not in the best of terms with each other, because of some old disputes between them. This put me in an odd situation. Somehow I would have to explain to a possible interviewee how I had found out about her, and it would be best to do this by pointing out a connection existed between us, but at the same time this piece of information might lead to her not wanting to be interviewed. In the end it took nearly a month before I collected enough courage to phone her. During this month, I kept looking for interviewees. I was in touch with various people around war-related issues, one of them being the editor of a book written by war orphans. Eventually, I also contacted the editor-in-chief of the *Karjala* [Karelia newspaper], to ask about the possibility of having an announcement published in the paper, which he agreed to. However, as I did not want to wait to do the interviews any longer, I phoned Bertta Kaukinen before the newspaper announcement was published.

Finding a clear strategy to tell Bertta Kaukinen how I had found out about her was not easy. It would have been unfortunate to contribute to more trouble between these two relatives who already had some schism between them. I had promised that I would not reveal the name of my contact, but I could not lie either, since she was of course entitled to know. Finally, the situation was solved naturally. I explained briefly about the research, and I also mentioned the call from my relative about the trip to Karelia. As she was active in that same society, coming from that same village, she quickly commented that she knew him. Once this first piece of information was delivered, she interrupted me, took over and started to talk about the evacuation journey. I am not quite sure about why Bertta Kaukinen was so ready to

participate. It could be that she had been told in advance that I would ring. One reason that she mentioned was that her daughter had written about being a war orphan for another book, which, as a matter of fact, turned out to be the same book that I had just been discussing with its editor. With the publication of her daughter's story, she felt that she could now talk herself, too. War widowhood and war orphanhood had not been public issues before. For her, she said, this would be the first time to speak publicly about being a war widow. All the details seemed to work in favour of an interview, and we agreed to meet straightaway the following day.

Even during the phone call, Bertta Kaukinen managed to say quite a bit. Her story came out very rapidly, in a condensed form. I just took notes, she talked. Yet she said she had not talked about her experiences publicly before. She described how she was seventeen when she first fled from her home before the Soviet troops arrived, carrying her belongings in a knapsack. She crossed the rapids in the nearby river, and helped some horses over, too. She listed the route and the means of travelling during the evacuation, and the place where her family settled. In the autumn of 1941 she was called to Äyräpää, to work in a military hospital. While on duty, she and a colleague were on their way to explore a cellar when there was an explosion and they were wounded. From this, she still has shrapnel in her body. Only much later, in the files of the War Archive, did she find out that it was a bomb that exploded. After a couple of months recovery time, she returned to work. She met a young soldier, and they got engaged. He died in an accident before their daughter was born. The parents of her fiancé asked her to stay with them, which she did, together with her daughter. She started to work. Later she remarried. She also talked about where she had been working, what her husband's profession was, and some information concerning the names of people. All this contributed towards a good start to my thinking about our meeting, as she made preparing for the interview easy.

I knew the city where she was living quite well, but her address happened to be in a part of it I had seldom visited. This added a layer of anxiety into the meeting with her, on top of my general nervousness about the interview. This meeting was going to be the first actual war widow interview. I rang the doorbell, she came to open the

door, we shook hands, and I could sense that the atmosphere might be slightly more formal than during the first two pre-interviews, and the one with my relative. There were several factors contributing to this. Bertta Kaukinen had an air of some distance to her, or she was perhaps slightly tense, in the same way I was. She was very well dressed and her hair was done by a professional, which made me want to check if my appearance was in order. She guided me into her living room. Her apartment was beautifully furnished, but not over the top, and everything was very precise about it. Afterwards, when I had been to the homes of all the women I interviewed, her home stood out as the one having antiques and other design furniture, paintings, heavier types of curtains, the colour scheme darker, the details carefully thought out. She had an inner-city apartment, whereas the others lived either in the countryside or outside the centre.

Despite the differences in style and location, there was a combining similarity between all the homes that I visited. Partly this was due to material emblems. In Bertta Kaukinen's home, I detected a glimpse of the white Äyräpää church photograph and a wall rug, which were the same paraphernalia that my grandmother had in her house. Even noticing how the coffee table was prepared ready in the kitchen reminded me of visiting my grandma, who had also always done such things in advance. Partly this was a more corporeal feeling of recognizing an atmosphere. Despite being nervous about the interview, it still felt easy to sit down, almost like coming to something familiar, even though I had to look for the address in order to meet with this woman who I had spoken with only once before, on the phone. This feeling was something that I recognised immediately at the beginning of the round of interviews, and I started to think about why this was. I cannot think of anything else except that the feeling was rooted in me already because of my grandmother's big drawing room. The easiness of settling in was perhaps based on being together in a room like this with an older woman, chatting, the way I had been with my grandmother.

There was no particular warming up period. Bertta Kaukinen had got her story off to such a good start during the phone call that we continued from where she had

stopped, which was about her being called up to work for the army. My nervousness showed – I made the mistake of not turning on the tape recorder right at the beginning, but I remembered it very soon. Luckily I was taking notes, and could check if a part was missing. She carried on with the story of her being wounded, which she had also talked about during the phone conversation. I was prepared for this, for I had noticed already during the pilot interviews and the talks with my relatives that the years of war would come up first in the discussion. The interviews started with descriptions of wartime events and evacuation. If I had not paid attention to this pattern earlier, I might have wanted to push the time of her beginning the story quickly from the ‘background in Karelia’ towards ‘post-war’, as was my initial plan. Now I knew that I had to wait until she had located herself in the war, and with this act registered the presence of war in her story, after which she would continue. Barbara Czarniawska (2004, p. 52) writes that it is important to let the interlocutors choose their own time frame. She suggests that the question ‘when did it all begin?’ is not particularly helpful, something which applies for the war widow interviews as well. Only Bertta Kaukinen could time her war widowhood. Furthermore, if I had interrupted the way that she, and more generally all of the widows, told their story, I would not have started to pay attention to why they chose to start with a war description, and then to attend to the overall time frame of their story and its connection to what I came to call ‘war’s times’.

Jaana Loipponen [JL]: It is Tuesday, third April, and we are at Bertta Kaukinen’s. We are at the stage when Bertta Kaukinen has been called into the army.

Bertta Kaukinen: I was called in on the first of January in 1941.

JL: And what did it mean? What happened then?

Bertta Kaukinen: Well our first job was to clean the rooms and carry down these pots from the attic and in these pots there was [mumbles fast]. Of course no need to write that down. (BK 2001, p. 1)

These pots were messed up with something that she did not want to be included in her interview, but it did not take much to imagine what was inside them. Since there is no video tape of the interview, I cannot check what my expression was, but I

believe I nodded to show that I understood what she meant. This short comment of hers about excluding certain kind of information had also repercussions for the whole interview. During the first minute of the first research interview with a war widow, I noticed that it was she who gave me orders about what to write down. It was her story, too. I had not come to the situation representing myself as an expert of any sort, but rather as somebody who was interested in the theme. This did not mean any diminishing in the authority which was given and taken because of the researcher role either, but it certainly made the task easier. The image of interviewing which is given in interview guides can be quite daunting, with its high expectations of the interviewer. It seemed that the set-up of my interviews was more equal than the image created in these guides. At the least, Bertta Kaukinen was fully aware of her rights. If she chose to tell, she made it clear that it was her decision: "I will tell this even though it is going onto the tape" (BK 2001, p. 27). She also gave reasons for not wanting something to be used. For example, she told me not to use the names of the members of her family, as she did not want them to be recognised: "You don't have to write that into your text. I don't want people to be recognized" (BK 2001, p. 15). Or she would tell about an incident at work, but already before starting with the story she told me not to use what she said: "This will absolutely not be taped!" (BK 2001, p. 52). She did not explicitly tell me to turn off the tape recorder, either, as happened with some other interviews. The interviewee here was no less prepared than the interviewer for this work of producing and gathering knowledge, which was a relief. Bertta Kaukinen knew what to tell, my job was to record it, and we were working together for this goal.

Her comments on running the interview fortified the sense that I received got from the pilot interviews. In some of the theory on interviewing, the interviewee is given a rather passive role. Alessssandro Portelli (1997, p. 9) refers to oral history interviews and reminds readers that the one who speaks first is usually the interviewer, and, by doing this, they define the roles and establish the basis of narrative authority, and the odds are that this happens even to the extent that the narrator may feel "entitled to speak only because of a mandate from the interviewer", or, "say what you want to hear". However, my experiences demonstrated that the interviewees absolutely did

not transform into passive ‘givers’ in an interview encounter. The same way as with my pre-interviewees, Bertta Kaukinen exerted control and agency in handling the situation. The right to speak about herself and influence the outcome was not even a question for her. According to Portelli, these qualities are not always assumed by people from the socially disadvantaged groups that oral historians often work with. Perhaps Bertta Kaukinen was not acting as a member of her class. However, my point of departure to war widowhood was nearly the opposite to what Portelli describes: I approached the widows as the ones who had made it and carried on with their lives, despite the trouble that had piled up for them on their way. Consequently, I did not think of her ability to watch out for the details as anything but a normal. At least she was not intimidated by the research. I even wrote after the meeting with her that she looked and felt ready for the stage, for a performance that she knew she would handle well. She was not nervous, as I had first thought, but on a mission: she wanted to speak out.

Bertta Kaukinen said sparsely what she wanted to say, and all the time she was aware of the situation. She was not as verbose a speaker as the people I had pre-interviewed had been, which showed in the length of the interview, which was an hour and a half for interviewing, with a twenty minutes coffee break added. This was less time than the early interviews took, and it turned out that the later ones would also take much longer. After the interview, I was uncertain if the time I had talked with her had been enough, and I also despaired about whether it had even been a ‘life-story interview’. I wrote in my work diary: “This is not an autobiographical interview, these are not stories. I only ask questions, our encounter is like any old interview I would do for writing about something as a journalist. I feel awful. I do not see myself as a researcher at all. My journalist background keeps re-surfacing.” I was consoled by reasoning, with words that made a lot of sense. My writer-researcher partner reminded me that very few people would list the events of their past sixty years without any questions being posed to them. “Besides, it does not make it any less a story if you ask questions”, he added.

Encouraged by this, I studied more closely what Bertta Kaukinen had actually said. A large part of the discussion was based on a question-answer structure, and her remarks to exert some control over the situation further punctuated the flow. Despite this pattern, which was also due to her economical manner of speaking, when the occasion needed it she also told longer stories. She just used generally little space for saying things, which was why at first glance her story-places were less conspicuous than, for example, in the talk of the pilot interviews. If she had something important to say, she told it in a story form, which was the case with issues such as her child, work, the city as a living environment, and her self-respect as a Karelian evacuee. Thinking about how much she managed to say within these quite short stories, her tactics to ensure the accurate proceeding of the interview became clear. She chose what she thought was important for her to tell, and then allowed it appropriate space. In sum, I discovered the story form in the interview as a part of the surface structure, only after I saw the questions and answers and how Bertta Kaukinen used these.

For Riessman (1990, pp. 224–226), the opposite worry made her discover the stories that her interviewees produced. Her social scientist training had prepared her to seek answers to the questions she made, but people went about their answers more or less as they wished; that these were narratives, not just data answers, became clear to her only midway through the study. Her description of her work encouraged me to try to summarize my own approach to interviewing, which was a mixture. I was simultaneously an ethnographer ‘gathering field data’, a social scientist ‘seeking answers’, a journalist ‘asking questions’ and a writer curious about people’s stories.

All the longer and mini-stories in Bertta Kaukinen’s interview sounded coherent and well-formulated. This made me unsure of what she had meant when she had said, when I first spoke to her, that she had not told her story before. However, I did not have enough experience with research interviews at this point to suspect that she might have told her story in one form or another before. This was my premiere war widow interview. In the early drafts of the interview analysis, I even wrote that undoubtedly it was the first time that she had told her story. This was certainly based

on the novice researcher ethos: I wanted to believe that I had discovered her and was the first one to hear her story.

Also the social constructionist approach that I had claimed was still shakily grounded. I had to struggle away from the seduction of regarding what people say as 'how it was', although the constructionist perspective and how to use it to analyse the narratives strengthened in due course of the research. One part of this approach is to think about why people say what they claim. Czarniawska (2004, p. 49) writes that "it would be both presumptuous and unrealistic to assume that a practitioner will invent a whole new story just for the sake of a particular researcher who happened to interview her". For Bertta Kaukinen, it was perhaps not a unique moment in telling her story, but her present agenda for telling it was, with the likely consequence of this an untold one. Participating in this war widow research may have represented for her the same kind of publicity that her daughter had gained by writing her story for a book that was published. However, this interpretation of her motivation for becoming public turned out to be insufficient, too. Later I found out that the combination of a public appearance and war widowhood meant something much deeper to her and had very much defined her life. I will return to this later, as I want to proceed here roughly in the same order as she did.

This first war widow encounter also contained a level that was personally remarkable. I asked Bertta Kaukinen about the plans that she and her fiancé perhaps had for their future:

Bertta Kaukinen: There were such thoughts as we would build a new house. We would not share one with our parents. On the Salomäki shore there was this pretty birch wood where we were planning this house.

JL: That would certainly have been a fine place. (BK 2001, p. 22)

I was left without words to comment, since, to my surprise, she referred to this favoured building place with my grandmother's family name. It was a peculiar feeling to hear this familiar surname suddenly in a new context. The coincidence of

her telling about a place where I had never been, which related to the one person that I knew very well, in the middle of interviewing somebody who was supposed to be a total stranger, was extraordinary. It occurred to me that she might have thought that I knew the place and that is why she so casually dropped the name. Or else, she thought of nothing, it was just a name. In any case, it was only later that I grasped what she had really said. If things had gone the 'normal' way, it would have perhaps meant that Bertta's family name, her surname then, was perhaps different from her present one, and after her marriage she would have lived somewhere near to where we would have lived. During the trip that I took to the places in Karelia that she was talking about, a month after this discussion, this piece of information was actually verified, since I got to know from my travel group that a part of the river shore had had this name. I found myself standing where Bertta Kaukinen had planned to have a home with her fiancé. There was no birch wood left, but instead the summer kitchen gardens of people from nearby St. Petersburg. Only a much later re-reading I did spot in her interview this same view, for she describes visiting near the river while on one of her visits back to the home region. It turned out to be no nostalgia trip for her. She just stated that it was not exactly how it had been: "The kitchen gardens were really well taken care of, there by the river. Everything else was so and so" (BK 2001, p. 56).

Widowed Before Marrying

Bertta Kaukinen summarized in a precise manner what had happened in her life since the war. The main things she brought out were meeting with her fiancé and then him dying accidentally; her being evacuated and settling with her daughter in the home of her in-laws. She described her feelings about being treated as a Karelian evacuee, and how this influenced her into moving into the city. Work was important, but it had consequences for childcare. The city as such she found a relief after the country with its stagnated atmosphere.

She had met with her future fiancé during the Continuation war. After being injured in the bomb explosion and staying at home for a month, she returned to her work

with the army.⁴⁷ Shortly after, a young soldier became interested in her and started asking her out. He was from the same village in Karelia, but they had not met before the war, since she had moved there later, being originally from the surrounding area. They got engaged; he was especially eager to become so. On the phone the previous day she had told me a dramatic story concerning her fiancé and their time together, and now I had the chance to ask more about what had happened:

JL: There was not so much time for the engagement. You said on the phone yesterday how your fiancé, on New Year's Eve...

Bertta Kaukinen: On New Year's Eve.

JL: Was it 1943, and your daughter was born 1944? He died on his way to his holiday?

Bertta Kaukinen: Yes, he was coming from Käkisalmi. And when it was wartime, the buses could not have the headlights on, so in the dark the bus ran over a pier.

JL: Oh. Was it some kind of a military task, or was he just coming for a holiday?

Bertta Kaukinen: Just leisure. Then he helped a lot of people out from the rear window, when the bus was kind of standing on its front. In the end he must have inhaled water himself, and stayed there.

JL: First he had helped the others. You were then expecting a daughter who was born?

Bertta Kaukinen: In June.

JL: Well, had you planned anything for this kind of a situation? Had you any support? You weren't in a profession then, or you were working in these wartime jobs. Where?

Bertta Kaukinen: In the Head Quarters. Or it was already then the Civil Service. It was back in my village. We thought that we had come to

⁴⁷ Bertta Kaukinen did not specify her assignment at the front, and I did not ask her either, but the majority of women worked as Lottas (Haavikko 1994, pp. 6–7). The Lotta Svärd organization, women's voluntary auxiliary organization, has been variously interpreted after the wars. Belonging to it has been either praised or slandered, and at one time former Lottas would not have said that they were members (Kinnunen 2006), so to have that discussion might have taken attention away from the theme of widowhood. However, the interviewees were not stopped if they wanted to talk about their work as a Lotta, as some did.

stay and live in our old place [referring to the forthcoming second evacuation] (BK 2001, pp. 5–10)

So far, Bertta Kaukinen's telling was very straightforward. She did not comment on the events or express many emotions but simply proceeded with her story. Their child was born in June. She had just come back home from the hospital, when she was told that she has to get ready for being evacuated, which took place a week after the childbirth. In her temporary destination, she received a message from her parents-in-law that they would very much welcome her and the child in the place to which they had been evacuated. After getting there, she had for the first time a moment for contemplation. This break carries over into her talk now and gives her a chance to express some of her feelings. I will return to this part of her story again in the context of talking about her losses in particular, later in this chapter:

JL: How did you carry on with life?

Bertta Kaukinen: Well, it was of course terribly difficult. It was such a big sorrow that I had no breast milk for the child. I had to feed her right away by artificial means. Or to dilute cow's milk. When it started to clear out a little, then my father-in-law died of a heart attack, spring 1945. So we stayed there, us three women. (BK 2001, p. 14)

Her fiancé's sudden death caused a chain of events, which I was unaware of when I continued asking:

JL: How was it again with your man dying? You surely had been planning your future together?

(...) Bertta Kaukinen: Mmmm. (...)
[

(...) JL: which was then broken down with his death. What sort of thoughts did you have in mind when your man had died and there was a small child and you had to leave your own home. Did you wonder about what might still happen?

Bertta Kaukinen: Yes, I did. In the place where I settled the wife of the local minister or was it the wife of a priest, I don't remember, she sent a letter. She wrote that if I wanted they would contact a family in Central Finland where I could move and get a normal dwelling for living and

being. Our place was an old dairy-house, with no comforts. Well of course I did not accept that offer. The child was baptized and the parents-in-law were present. She got her father's surname.

JL: True, you never had time to marry.

Bertta Kaukinen: Well no, we had not even thought about it yet.

JL: How did it influence your status when the child was born when you weren't married? You still got a war widow status?

Bertta Kaukinen: No, I did not.

JL: How did that then influence your life in practice? You surely went to work, and?

Bertta Kaukinen: My daughter was less than two when I started to work in a nearby city in 1946. (BK 2001, p. 18–20)

She condensed into this exchange a lot of things that had in many ways affected her and her child's life. Because her fiancé died before they were married, she was never accorded a war widow status. In practise, this meant all financial support was missing. If I understand correctly the episode with the suggestion from priest's wife, her position was also socially more vulnerable, probably due to her single motherhood as well as being an evacuee from Karelia, but also because she fell outside the war-created aid systems for widows and orphans. She was a very young mother who was also a single care-taker, a migrant without a job. Her own family was not there, nor was the village that under normal circumstances would have surrounded her with a network of care. However, she had no intention of turning into somebody who needed to be helped out, even when the idea of her moving to better housing conditions might have made some sense. She refused categorically. Otherwise she would have also lost the presence of her parents-in-law. This help was invaluable, as it was then the grandmother who took care of the child when Bertta Kaukinen started to work. It turned out that she travelled to the city during the weeks and returned on Saturdays, but the daughter stayed with her grandmother. This is the arrangement they made, although there would have been childcare also in the city where she was working.

JL: Well you ended up with this solution, still.

Bertta Kaukinen: Yes, she wanted it then. (BK 2001, pp. 24–25)

She does not specify who it was that wanted it, but I suppose she meant the grandmother, because the child might not have been asked at the age of two. Also later during the interview, Bertta Kaukinen mentioned that back in Karelia it would have most likely been the mother-in-law who would have taken care of the child, during the time when the mother was working. When her daughter was eleven, she was asked but she wanted to continue staying with her grandma, even when her mother established a home elsewhere, in connection with being remarried. I tried to ask her more about this, but managed to say it so indirectly that she could only answer in a roundabout way. How does one ask how it feels a young mother and to be separate from her child because this appears the right thing to do? Nonetheless, despite Bertta Kaukinen rationalizing the story, she also described some contradictory feelings:

JL: If one thinks of you being a very young widow and having a small child, and being in a new place. So, was there something in this equation that made you think? Or was it that you came to your new work and that was it? Or was there something else?

Bertta Kaukinen: Well of course there were all sorts of thoughts. I had a room of my own and my daughter slept there then or with her grandma. She was so attached to her granny, this was until she was 11. That is a long time. (BK 2001, p. 25)

In general, one must just respect her ability to be able to make sharp decisions and know her way. She had had very little time to prepare for the changes in her life. One such need for rapid adjustment was in regard to her pregnancy. This was revealed when I started to ask more about the future that she might have planned together with her partner:

JL: How about the child? Had you had time to plan, or surely you had not that much time. She was born when the father was not there anymore.

Bertta Kaukinen: Listen, I wouldn't remember that precisely, but I don't think he even knew.

JL: It can be so.

Bertta Kaukinen: We didn't talk about it then.

JL: Did you know yourself when your man died?

Bertta Kaukinen: No, I didn't know either until after he had died.

JL: How did it feel?

Bertta Kaukinen: It was quite a feeling. Yes, it was a heavy blow. (BK 2001, pp. 40–41)

Her wording of “a heavy blow” comprises the whole history of her then very recent past. The young father never knew about his child, and the mother remembers finding out about the child only after his death. She changed from a young fiancée to a widowed pregnant single mother almost in one instant. The war was looming over her shoulder all the way through her pregnancy, with this threat in the end realizing itself as the need for rapid evacuation. She gave birth early June, and was evacuated shortly after. For Bertta, this was already a second time; but in this case with a child of six days to look after. On top of all the other changes that had taken place during the five preceding months, she also became a migrant, although in her own country, and without home, fortune, income, social benefits. One can only imagine how she must have felt in her temporary location after leaving the family home in Karelia. Then in short a while she moved in with her parents-in-law, in a new place in Southern Finland. Yet, even after so many changes and adjustments, she still found the will to resist an offer from a woman in a powerful position.

Bertta Kaukinen's situation was such that without the marriage certificate she was not entitled to a war widow pension. Her parents-in-law tried to help, by clearly indicating that it was their grandchild with the choice of the surname. The father-in-law had also connections to certain politicians of Karelian background, but he died before he had used his contacts. She stressed managing financially, but there were emotionally enduring moments:

JL: How did you feel yourself, when in principle, now when one thinks today of the situation, you should have been allowed a war widow pension, despite the fact that you did not get married. You wouldn't even have had time to get married, under the circumstances.

Bertta Kaukinen: Yes, but you see the situation with money was as it was then. And not even the Parliament was in Helsinki, but in Kokkola or wherever [referring to the government being evacuated to a safer place from the capital which was heavily bombed]. So everything was kind of floating. From our county in Karelia we had a person in the government, I can't remember if he was a minister then, and my father-in-law said that he knows this Luukka [Emil Luukka, Minister of the Interior, and after the wars Minister of Agriculture] he will talk to him. But then that issue was dropped when he died. But, there were no clothes to buy, and there was no food there to eat [for my daughter] and here I had my salary to buy groceries. So, I never had a lack of food. Never.

JL: Did you ever think then that it was in a way a tougher start for you than for many others who were in a similar situation otherwise. You had the parents of your husband to help out, true. But otherwise you had not the same support as the others had.

Bertta Kaukinen: Right.

JL: You did not suffer from lack of anything. Did you ever think that I [you] should also have had...

Bertta Kaukinen: I did not feel sorry for not getting [the pension, the official status]. But of course everything else, one can think of what all that living and being alone was. Even though the economical side was in order, but otherwise yes, it is awful [she uses the present tense]. (BK 2001, pp. 41–43)

Besides talking about how she arranged her life after the war, Bertta Kaukinen also described some events that had made her sad and angry. She interpreted these as due to her being Karelian and a single woman. The earlier-mentioned letter from the local parish appears to belong to this category, although she did not construe this as the reason behind it explicitly. Some incidents she told about but did not want them to be further used. One unpleasant incident was going to affect her future life a great deal, as it contributed to her pursuing a career elsewhere, not in the place where her mother-in-law and daughter stayed. When she was looking for work, she first tried

the local municipal office in the same place where she was living with her in-laws. A female municipal manager told her right away that she would not get a job. There was a history to this, for she had been a customer in the same office and already felt that she had been treated badly:

Bertta Kaukinen: I thought then that I will look for a job in the municipal office. There was this woman as a manager, I can't remember her name. I was told straight to my face that I will not get the job. I went to the cemetery then and cried. Oh well, I will tell this even though it is going onto that tape. This happened when at that time a part of the corn harvest needed to be handed over. The reception was in the municipal house and paperwork was included. It was me who took care of such matters. At the same time we bought the food card, one had to apply for them. When I then went to get the cards, this application was nowhere. I said that it must have gone with the papers for handing over the load of corn. Well it was found there. That municipal director got angry and said that I [she] do know where it could be. The hatred towards the evacuees was so strong, at least when it came to that woman. (BK 2001, pp. 27–28)

Later she returns to this same scene in connection with looking for a job in the city. She stopped trying to find one where she lived after she was rejected once. She repeats how she thought that this had happened only because she was an evacuee. She could not talk to anybody about how she had been treated:

Bertta Kaukinen: Then I looked for a job here in the city. I only did it once there [in the countryside] when I was not accepted. The reason for that was simply the fact that I was an evacuee.

JL: So it appeared that first time. How did you get over that evacuee thing then?

Bertta Kaukinen: I went to the cemetery and cried till I was all exhausted. Then I cycled back home. I did not tell anybody that this happened. I just said that it did not exactly work out. (BK 2001, pp. 49–50)

For her the change from the countryside to the city seemed crucial in many ways. She was uncomfortable in a small country town: “When you just spend your time in the countryside, it is so very difficult. It was so bland, you could not develop yourself or anything. Nothing” (BK 2001, p. 51). She used the expression ‘come to the

rescue' to define the meaning of the city as a social and emotional environment for her. Work and friends were the contributors to this sense, as well as the greater open-mindedness of city folk:

Bertta Kaukinen: When one has participated in working life and got a job in a city like this, here in X, it has kind of come to the rescue from the trouble in-between. Work has brought new things to think about, and then there has been the work with the customers.

[a story that she BK did not want made public, pp. 52–53]

Everybody was very friendly. It is the city. It is because people are civilized, they don't want to look for and rummage about one's mistakes and something like that and say it aloud. There is something in every person to pick on. I have at least managed really well with that in my life in that I have had very good colleagues and superiors. (BK 2001, pp. 54–55)

If, after she moved to the city there were other humiliating incidents like the one in the municipal office, she did not mention them, but instead stressed people minding their own matters in the city; being civilized (BK 2001, p. 29). In the city, neither her widow position nor her being Karelian separated her from her colleagues, since "all the men had been in the war" (BK 2001, p. 54). She was not questioned about origins, which I asked her about as a continuation to her story about being refused a job (BK 2001, pp. 28–29). She was not recognized as Karelian: "Nobody has thought of me as Karelian, but when I am with a group of Karelians, I speak the dialect then" (BK 2001, p. 38). In the interview, she talked mostly in standard Finnish.

JL: Did you work consciously to drop the dialect or did it just start to disappear?

Bertta Kaukinen: It just vanished. I don't remember what my daughter said when she came to visit me at work, but my colleagues were amazed at how she was cute and even spoke the Karelian dialect. (BK 2001, pp. 38–39)

Fighting Loss

If I had had in mind a ‘model’ story of loss before I started the interviews, it would not have been anything like Bertta Kaukinen’s war widow account. In the usual tale of loss, one has accumulated something, which one then loses. Young Bertta kept losing before she ever had. Because of war, she lost the opportunity to carry on with a normal young person’s way of life, to study, experiment with life and then settle:

Bertta Kaukinen: (...) My mother said that I will be sent to school [studying for a profession] in Vyborg. Such things could be discussed together with them.

JL: It didn’t then work out, going to school in Vyborg?

Bertta Kaukinen: No, it didn’t work out.

JL: But it surely would have come true.

Bertta Kaukinen: For sure, if it had not been for [the war]. (BK 2001, pp. 34–35)

She lost her fiancé before they had found out about her pregnancy; her daughter lost her father before she was born; and they all lost parenthood and being a family together before they even knew it would be possible. She not only lost the anticipated family roles but even the chance to plan these roles in advance. In general, she had not had much time to create any ways of being with her fiancé. Payne, Relf and Horn (1999, p. 67) discuss theories of bereavement, one of the most influential one being Colin Murray Parkes’ work on psychosocial transitions followed by loss (Parkes 1971). Parkes (1970, 2001 [1972]) has also studied widows. The problem with such theories is that they seem to imply a stable situation which then changes. Bertta undoubtedly faced psychosocial changes, but perhaps not in regard to one’s taken for granted ways of living; she had not had time to create that kind of assumptive world. According to Parkes’ theory of change and grief, one goes through a transition period and creates a new identity to cope with the loss. Bertta had very little time for this with all the changes and losses taking place at a rapid pace one after another. Most likely she was just starting to form a sense of self when the war broke out. Then with

her being evacuated, working for the army during the war, getting wounded, returning, and all the rest of what the wartime conditions mean for everybody, whatever she had started to become before the war changed continuously and developed in sudden and unexpected ways. She did not have enough time to build an identity so as to undergo changes; instead her identity was built through the changes. Peter Marris (1993) argues that the whole structure of meaning collapses at the moment of loss, whether through death or other crucial events. A part of managing this change is retrieving the essential meaning of what is lost. For Bertta, there was not much to fall back to, because the time she had had with her fiancé was so short, but the way she remembers details such as where they were planning to build a house, even the name of this place, suggests that she managed to hold on to something very essential about her relationship, something which made it possible for her to create new meaning to life, too.

Bertta Kaukinen lost her home, the stability around her and a familiar setting in which to bring up a child even before she had time to recover from giving birth and to start planning the future with her child. She even lost these things in the ‘wrong’ way, since losing a fiancé did not count towards her being given a war widow status, not even with a ring to show, a baby to present, and her in-laws’ statement about the couple having been a couple. When her fiancé died, she did not know that she was pregnant and thus already a war widow, but then she had simultaneously also already lost this status - before knowing that she was going to have it. Fortunately for this study, she managed to hold on to interpreting herself as a war widow, despite the official status being missing. It could be that for her losing the status of a war widow was somehow compensated for by the environment of the city and her status at work. She gained her independence through these, and she did not need to attach her social status solely on her relationship with her fiancé being acknowledged, which would have been the gain from her getting the war widow’s pension (Marris 1958, p. 102). In her talk, she stresses her economical survival. Still, until her daughter was 11 years old, she was a single parent and the sole wage earner for a unit of three women, “us three women” (BK 2001, p. 14), as she put it, for there was also a mother-in-law who stayed at home with the child. She too was a widow, widowed right after the

war ended, so her income may not have been too high, either. Bertta Kaukinen never mentions the financial arrangements with her mother-in-law. And also because she worked in the city, all the costs for the household and living were probably doubled.

In parallel with Bertta Kaukinen's story of sudden unprepared losses after one another, there is the story of the next step taken. The work which is needed to solve problems starts immediately after a loss. Even in what appears the most impossible moment, the direction is forward. Earlier in the interview, she had told that giving birth and the evacuation practically coincided, and this part of what she said is discussed concerning the things that I find she stressed in her story (see 'Widowed Before Marrying'). First, she limited the information she gave to dates, but then after a while she also described her feelings, as the first crack in her otherwise rather straightforward telling. Her sorrow and fear about the rapid changes occurring are such that her body refuses to co-operate. She cannot feed her child with breast milk and needs to use a substitute. After the nearly sixty past years that have passed, this is the first thing that comes to her mind about the events happening then: "I could not have breast milk for the child. I had to feed her from early on by artificial means. Or to dilute cow's milk" (BK 2001, p. 14). It was not only the society around her that collapsed, for the war confused everything else, too. Not even the age-old image of a woman and her body functioning for the benefit of a child could be trusted, something which still bewilders her. I cannot leave this scene, even though she herself has already moved on to telling about her life after these events. Also her telling about these events with such calm is intriguing, not to mention the contents. I keep asking and she tells, now in more detail – and she has time to correct my mistakes – that, considering the circumstances, she had it fine with her daughter. An outsider cannot understand how this can be told even now without an upsurge of emotions, but the woman in the situation was fine when there was just a little comfort. Carrying on with life took place the moment a new loss was detected:

JL: I want to return to asking about that time in June, from the seventh when you gave birth to when you were evacuated, a week later. Did you know already at the hospital that it looked like Karelia was about to be lost?

Bertta Kaukinen: No, not yet then. It came as a bolt from the blue. There was this military police in the village, they were local people. They went around in the evening and said that in the morning at three o'clock we must leave. You see, it happened so fast, this conquest by the Russians or their triumph.

JL: So when you came back from Vyborg from the hospital, from Naistenklinikka [Maternity Clinic]

Bertta Kaukinen: From Maternity Hospital
[she corrects my mistake with the name Naistenklinikka, which was not used as a name for the hospital in Vyborg, but in Helsinki]

JL: So you had just a couple of days at home, when they came to say that [you will have to leave]. Did that not feel with a small baby girl [the sentence is left unfinished]

Bertta Kaukinen: We had a horse chaise, you see. I was driving the horse and my daughter was there next to me, so we were all right. It was good in that sense. We had the chaise for the whole journey. Then at one station, I don't remember all the stations, was it Jääski or Antrea, those horses were loaded into the train.

JL: How about that stage really, when you had just given birth and had to leave rapidly. Did you have time to take along any gear, for the child or for yourself? How was the very beginning? Or, well, just the departure. How did you manage to prepare for what was going to come?

Bertta Kaukinen: We did have a corn load with us. Mum and dad were driving the other horse. They had the load with the most corn. My younger sister herded the cows to the lake. I wonder what the name of that place was. We took milk from the house and boiled water to blend. A little baby like that does not need anything else.

JL: So you had time to take her things?

Bertta Kaukinen: Yes. (BK 2001, pp. 16–18)

The events at the front in June 1944 are depicted in several war histories, because the Soviet side launched a massive attack, which forced people like Bertta to leave their homes hastily. A Karelian matron has condensed this situation into a well-known saying (Raninen-Siiskonen 1999, p. 13): “When they came in through the doors, we were climbing out the windows.” I know now that Bertta is there too with her daughter, riding in a horse chaise. While the long caravans of people on the roads, on

horses or on foot, stop for a pause, she tries to get water boiled to blend it with cow's milk for her child. A little child like that, a week old baby, does not need anything else, Bertta says, in the present tense, sixty years afterwards. She does not add that this kind of mixture can still be hard on the baby's stomach. None of the descriptions in general presentations of Finnish history names the civilians, the mothers like Bertta and the runny-stomach babies like her daughter, escaping for their lives. In these military scenes, Finland is losing because of superior enemy force, while in Bertta's story, she has to beat the circumstances and proceed to safety:

“Because Finland had not accepted the peace treaty of the spring of 1944, the Soviet Union decided to settle matters with its stubborn north-western neighbour by military means. On 9 June [this is two days after Bertta Kaukinen has given birth to a daughter in a maternity hospital in Vyborg] three days after the Allied landing in Normandy, a thoroughly prepared Red Army launched a massive attack in the Karelian Isthmus. With six times as many troops as the Finns, its superiority was overwhelming” (Jussila, Hentilä & Nevakivi 1999, p. 207).

“The Soviet Union had concentrated 450,000 men – more than one Soviet soldier out in the Finnish forests per one unarmed Karelian refugee, as even the total number of the refugees including the ones from the North was around 420,000 people – 10,000 pieces of artillery, 800 tanks and 2,050 aircraft. The artillery concentration was one of the heaviest in world military annals: in some places, there were as many as 400 pieces of artillery firing away along a stretch of only slightly over half a mile. The Finnish front line was smashed immediately” (Jutikkala & Pirinen 2003, pp. 452–453).

Vyborg was taken on 20 June almost without a fight (Jussila, Hentilä & Nevakivi 1999, p. 207). This was two weeks after the nineteen-year-old Bertta had given birth to a baby girl in this city. Now Vyborg was occupied by the Soviets, and had effectively ceased being a Finnish city. When Bertta left familiar places behind, she did not know that the landscape where she had planned to raise her child was closing behind the people running away for more than fifty years, after which time some of these people would return, but only as visitors.

It is quite embarrassing to read afterwards what one has asked about a situation as difficult as an evacuation must be. The transcription shows that I wondered, and

certainly based my question about this on my own peacetime technology and gadget-oriented motherhood, about how Bertta Kaukinen had ‘prepared’ for the future. For all the obvious reasons, she just ignores my question and goes on to what the real issue is, being on the verge of losing all that one has. To my shame, I continue pressing her about the ‘gear’, and finally she just cuts me short. She had time from the evening hours until three in the morning to get ready to leave. This was the second time for her to be evacuated. Everybody knew what they had to do. They would need bread and income in the future, so they started loading corn and taking care of the cattle. Certainly she packed what she could think of for her baby and for herself, but for her this goes without saying under the circumstances. She had also other people and duties to mind. The unit of her family, the cattle, everything mattered as a whole.

As one of the viewpoints concerning loss, I had considered that loss is also “the point of departure for something else. The moment in which loss is clearly marked and articulated is also the moment in which something else, as yet unnamed, has come into being” (Rogoff 2000, p. 3). Similarly, loss is described as a moment of production (Eng & Kazanjian 2003, p. 1–6) in connection with the thoughts that Walter Benjamin had on historical materialism and concerning the past, which Eng and Kazanjian (2003) understand as hopeful. I was considering this as applied to wartime, which, despite its absolute threat to people, also makes people constantly seek solutions, as there is no other choice for them. This is especially true afterwards, when grief, hesitation and fear get less space in the story as told than they must have received in the middle of things happening. No matter how many times Bertta Kaukinen has lost, she has to tell a story of working out the situation. The problem is included in that formulation: she has to. She has no choice. She knows that it did not help her then, nor would it now, if she did not somehow carry on. A woman alone with a child and without a home must continue, she has to find a place, find food, work, and settle, eventually. This is why I also resist the conceptualization of ‘loss as a moment of production’. Such things can be said generally, but not to a person grieving or fearing for her and her child’s life. And anyway, when is loss so clearly

marked and articulated? Loss is fear and a threatening void, and it sounds simplistic to say 'Bertta Kaukinen made it, despite her losses'.

However, now that there was a war and it was hard (wars do not have to happen, it does not have to be hard), and while listening to her, a pattern of 'something else coming to being' was starting to emerge. Every loss of hers was counterbalanced with her trying even harder. This did not mean that everything could be replaced. But at no stage did she focus on the irretrievability of her losses. When she was treated in a manner that she found was not respectful while looking for work, she cycled to the cemetery and cried. This was the only channel for her to express her sorrow. She knew that there it was allowed for a young widow to be tearful. She had no friends yet in the new location and at home her parents-in-law had their own sorrows:

Bertta Kaukinen: I had no such person to whom I could have talked about my sorrow. My mother- and father-in-law were the only ones but I could not complain to them. They had enough to deal with their own sorrow with losing their only son. When I moved to the city, then I had a lot of friends. (BK 2001, p. 54)

Bertta Kaukinen includes in her story her next move and her sense of growing all the time. It is not possible to know how much she has had to work on these issues to make it sound like this. As a young mother dependent on others, she may not at the time have felt as brave as it sounds in telling now. She could not tell anyone at the time about her worries, and she had to think of the feelings of her in-laws. She did not get the job, but she cried it out of her system and looked for a new one. Both things could also be contained in representing herself as a sad lonely evacuated Karelian girl, but she does not do that; her approach is productive. She did not take the refusal of work personally in a way that she would have started to blame herself, but instead saw this as the result of general hatred towards the evacuees. It could be also claimed that she does not dare to admit that this was an attack on her and had nothing to do with other things. However, this would not have helped her, but the story of the more general sense of disapproval did. Also her comments on the Karelians being discriminated against could be interpreted as her bearing grudges, and she has stayed angry in some ways. The other possibility is that she now finally

dares to say how she felt then. She had nobody to talk to after the war, and when she moved to the city I doubt that she talked about such things with her new friends there. She said earlier that she was not recognized as Karelian. When she adapted into a new language environment, this would have meant that her origins were not mentioned, if they were not suppressed. After her retirement, Bertta Kaukinen says she has been active with Karelian affairs, as well as with the disabled veterans of the war (BK 2001, p. 39).

Another situation which Bertta Kaukinen made work, despite its particular difficulty, was explaining to her daughter about the missing father. There clearly was a void that was not possible to fill with anything, but it could be talked about, although, as I interpret her answer below, this was both easy and difficult. Even when she could not offer a soothing version, she was convinced that the child's mind was oriented towards the future. According to one theory on coping with loss, those who do not ruminate about their loss and who find meaning in their loss very shortly after it happens, may not remain distressed over time (Nolen-Hoeksema & Larson 1999, p. 17). This approach is perhaps what Bertta Kaukinen both had to apply in practice, and which also was the only possibility for her. There was no time to mull over her losses, nor her place, when she did not have a home of her own. Meaning had to be found, which for her meant trusting the future.

JL: How could you explain to your child that her father is not there? How did you experience your role as the mother and the father, even when you had her grandmother to support you in that task? Was it easy to explain it to her or difficult?

Bertta Kaukinen: Yes it was. When we slept in the same room together, in the evening before falling asleep we always talked together.

JL: Did she say how she experienced the situation?

Bertta Kaukinen: A child cannot really express such things. She lives in the time which is the current time and cannot live in the time that was. Our engagement photograph was there, her grandma enlarged it. It was there on the table. Daddy, daddy, she pointed at it.

JL: She said so.

Bertta Kaukinen: Yes.

JL: Did you trust that things will work out?

Bertta Kaukinen: Yes I did. I trusted my in-laws, in a way that I knew how they wanted what was good for us. There are some who hate the daughter-in-law. I was always welcome. Always. (BK 2001, pp. 47–49)

Bertta Kaukinen had the ability to turn her losses, if not always into victories, at least into ways of dealing with the problems and carrying on with her life. This did not mean that she stopped thinking of the things that were past. For example, some of the consequences of war were present in her life. One such thing was the presence of her absent first fiancé that occasionally pierced through to the present moment. When I asked about the time of their engagement, she could not immediately recollect the exact year, and turned around a little, as if to get up, then looked down on her own finger to check.

JL: Shortly after you returned to the front, you were engaged. Or was this already before?

Bertta Kaukinen: No, it was after, I was after it... Let's look here from the ring. – No it's not in this ring, when I have remarried. Yes, it was maybe around 1941, in November. It's not all that important. (BK 2001, p. 5)

Instead of checking the date in her engagement ring that she was thinking of, when she looked she saw her wedding ring of the marriage that took place over fifteen years after the engagement. The engagement ring belonged to the relationship with her fiancé who died in an accident during wartime. For a second she was totally perplexed, so much so that the transition between what she thought she was looking at and what she actually saw was totally visible in her body. It felt that she had just got the engagement ring put onto her finger, and she was back in the situation as it was before those nearly sixty years that had passed between their engagement and her telling me about it now. Her totally instinctive and bodily reaction to remembering time caused almost a physical reaction in my body, too. I was suddenly in company of a young girl who had got engaged, and who, almost without a distinction, was also an elderly lady who had stayed engaged ever since. It was

almost intimidating to come so close to something so private, for this felt no longer a story of the past, but her experience now. Benjamin (1999, p. 247) explains this kind of an exchange between the past and the present as an image that flashes up suddenly: “The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again.” He means by this that the stuff of history is not the causal sequence, not the year, not the date, not “the true picture”, but a memory: “It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at the moment of danger” (Benjamin 1999, p. 247).

We were talking about Bertta Kaukinen’s life and she was trying to remember things. All this was based on how the things were, there was a material connection, but she had to build it up anew. To this I added, and add, by asking, analysing and now writing. This is a wonderful story that all these agents have created together, also with theoretical thoughts on the issues that have been raised. After all these attempts, the next day the story could change its form, even if just a little bit, and there is nothing that is particularly terrible about this. Nothing is just as it was, when told about. Then all of a sudden, there is one flash, one “chip of Messianic time”, if one wishes to use Benjamin’s elaboration, and the past is one with the present, the present as the “time of the now” (Benjamin 1999, p. 255). It is the moment when memory is allowed its full capacity, and it, exactly, flashes through the present.

Nothing in Bertta Kaukinen’s story was going to explain in a more profound way how war in its abrupt intrusive manner enters into people’s lives. The memory of the sudden changes was so strong that it wiped aside all the years in-between and pushed its way right through Bertta’s skin. Since I was there, I felt the sharp bite of history, too. Benjamin’s (1999, p. 255) understanding of the task of a historian illuminated itself as fully comprehensible: “A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one.”

Consequently, this incident also had political repercussions which I perceived only later when Bertta Kaukinen had talked about her non-existence as a war widow for ‘the system’. I had initially interpreted her early statement of finally wanting to talk

about her war widowhood as a reaction to her daughter appearing as a war orphan in something she wrote for a book. However, her agenda may not have been just the sense of freedom to talk after her daughter had spoken. When she said that she had not been officially approved of as a war widow, because she was without the marriage certificate, I remembered how she naturally looked down on her finger to check the date for engagement. This made me think how it must have come as a shock to have the seriousness of her relationship doubted, when the bureaucratic procedure could not manage to show respect to their commitment. It was hard not to be accepted within the legal system, but simultaneously this decision was a sign of the system ridiculing her choice for the future. As a result, maybe the reason for her wanting 'to speak now' was above all that she wanted to make known her war widow status, but by showing her autonomy, which for a while she was deprived of and about which she could do nothing at the time. Participating in the research offered at least some legitimate access to expressing those sides of her experience which were suppressed before.

Bertta Kaukinen wrapped up the interview herself. She just got up while talking about her visits to Karelia, which turned out to be the final subject of what she regarded as the interview and its boundaries. With her behaviour and gesturing, she indicated that she wanted to move on to a new issue, which was to look for some photo albums to show me a photograph. Even her tone changed. She mellowed from her precise expression to a chattier manner. I had the clear impression that she felt she had now done what she could for the war widow cause, and she wanted to move on to what she had to say to me personally. Her news was that she was not searching for a photograph of herself, but one in which she said my grandmother would be present. Since they were from the same village, they had gone to the same school and clubs, and she thought there was a photograph where they were either together or my grandma was with other people in a school or club picture. I could only watch in awe when she went around between different cupboards and tried to find the right album. I had never seen so many old-style albums. My grandmother's scarce collection of photographs had been in a round tin box. My heart started to pound because of the

prospect of her finding a photo of my grandmother, since I had never seen a picture of her as a young girl.

Simultaneously, I thought that this situation was exactly the reverse from what it was supposed to be. At that point she was providing me with information about my family, instead of me learning about her life. She definitely had the narrative authority in that situation, and she surely had already planned to do this before I got there, which means that she had been preparing for a meeting with somebody of whom she had heard some previous information. I could only wonder how that had influenced our exchange. She did not find the photo in the end. However, even the possibility of it was exciting. Somebody whom I had met for this one meeting had information that I had never known that anybody possessed. I thought of the interviewer encounter, and of the possibilities that a meeting opens up, even when they are of less substance than the research encounter with Bertta Kaukinen, who knew of me as my grandmother's granddaughter probably before I had even thought of the possibility of research on war widows. In this sense of widening and deepening one's existence, the binding flash between the past and the present was present again, intertwining in unexpected ways.

A year after the meeting with Bertta Kaukinen, I was given the present of a book about the history of the village where my grandma and Bertta had once lived. I looked through the pictures. In one of the photographs, my grandma appears in a girly fancy dress, with round cheeks, soft hair and a sharp look (Kaukinen 2002, p. 160). This was a photograph taken in the village study club. Perhaps this was this picture that Bertta Kaukinen meant. I looked at the names, and one of the girls in the group was named Bertta. For a while, it was my turn to be bewildered. Indeed, they were both present in this photograph. I started to think of what Bertta's maiden name had been. Then, I paused and laughed. Of course both Bertta and the surname Kaukinen were pseudonyms that I had given to her, and she had stated that her real name should not be used. My own pseudonyms had pulled my leg; the story had taken over; Bertta was not present in the picture. Yet her existence was a part of its history, since without her it may not have occurred to me to look for this sort of

photograph. Besides, if she had not told about her life, I would not have known so much of the story after the photograph was taken as I did at that moment of looking at my grandma's girlish face. In the encounter with Bertta Kaukinen, I had come to the point where narrative production and narrative analysis originates, from understanding the connected constellations between times, voices and structures, real or imagined.

Kyllikki Iloranta

Kaleidoscopic Meditations

The announcement in which I asked people to participate in my war widows research was published in the *Karjala* (The Karelia newspaper) on 12 April 2001. The second person that rang me that evening was Kyllikki Iloranta. She introduced herself briefly as a war widow from the neighbourhood, explaining that she said this because of living near to what was given as the reply address. She did not directly inquire about the research, but she made it clear that she was willing to be interviewed.

Communication between us was easy and clear, since she had herself chosen to phone me because she identified herself as a war widow. There was no third party involved, compared with the Bertta Kaukinen interview, when I had been asked not to tell the name of the person who had initially contacted me. Otherwise there was not much difference between the beginnings of these encounters. Bertta Kaukinen did not know about the research before I phoned her (or maybe she did, as I have subsequently speculated), and Kyllikki Iloranta phoned herself after finding out about the research, but both were similarly willing to be involved. The telephone conversation with Kyllikki Iloranta was short because, differently from Bertta Kaukinen, she did not go into details about her life. This second interview was booked to take place in a couple of weeks, after the May Day festivities.

Before providing detail about my encounter with Kyllikki Iloranta, I want to reflect briefly on the first phone call I received on the day when the announcement about my research was published, as this was illustrative of the theme of the research, war, loss

and the individual. The caller, who described herself as a peace-time widow, wanted to talk about her mother, who had been a war widow. She started by describing the Elisenvaara railway station bombing, where a train full of evacuated civilians was hit and 134 civilians died (Hietanen 1992, p. 134). Elisenvaara was an important railroad on the Karelian Isthmus. The family of the caller was temporarily staying there, as her father worked on the railroad. When the bombing started without any warning, the rest of the family took shelter in a neighbour's cellar. The bombing lasted a quarter of an hour, and when they came out there were only blackened ruins left of the train, bodies lying around and dead cattle all along the railroad. Her father, as well as "all the men in the family" who were working in the wood yard, died in the bombing. At the time, this terrible event was silenced because the media was not allowed to publish news about the losses on the Finnish side. In the Finnish War Archive there is very little information, too, but the Russian War Archive contains detailed information about the bombing (Rahkola 2006).

Bertta Kaukinen had escaped with her baby daughter, born a week before, when the Soviets launched a massive onslaught on the Karelian Isthmus. The Elisenvaara bombing belonged to this series of actions. In regard to Bertta Kaukinen, I commented that none of the main war histories mentioned the individuals fleeing on the crowded roads; what was written about was the military events (see also Kirby 2006, p. 230). Again, when checking the details of the bombing in Elisenvaara, the same problem was encountered: none of the English language Finnish history books that have been used for this thesis, mention or discuss this most destructive air bombing that occurred during the war. However, the Soviet June attack, and the military power used, as well as loss of the city of Vyborg that very same day, are mentioned. In the *'Concise History of the Continuation War'* (Hietanen 2005, p. 825), the first comprehensive, and highly praised, presentation of the war of 1940–1945 (including what is known as the 'Lapland War') published in the last decade, only mentions this event in passing. In an earlier history by the same authors, the space given to it was a caption, which was attached to the main photograph of the double-page spread (Hietanen 1992, p. 134). In both these cases, the writer is the same, and the context is the evacuation. And, when it is the civilians, mostly women

and children, in this case specifically 112 of them with 3 lottas, and 19 soldiers (Rahkola 2006), who are the target, in the traditional war histories this is not listed even as an attack because the concern is explaining the army and its moves and calculating military losses. In the one mention I found of the civilians of the June retreat, they are just said to have been evacuated, and amongst the events of 19–20 June the bombing is not mentioned (Juutilainen 2005, pp. 801–802). Pointing out the absence of the civilians in war history has not happened until recently in Finland, and has been placed under the label of ‘new war history’ (Kinnunen and Kivimäki 2006).

Contrary to war history, in literature people’s personal experiences of the war have been depicted for a long time, including the period of war, but also resettling and sorting out the consequences of war in people’s lives thereafter (Jääskeläinen 2004). The novelist Laila Hietamies, for instance, describes one of the main characters of her set of war novels discussed earlier, the war widow and lotta Liisa Lunden, being caught in the Simola bombing, which in war chronology is thought of together with the Elisenvaara attack, 19–20 June (Hietamies 2004). However, even at this very early stage of my research, the few people with whom I had had contact had all told me things that could barely if at all be found in the public and official presentations of the history of the war. In addition to the caller expressing her individual view of these events, her call had a further meaning. Similarly to the other contacts, she started by describing a wartime event but then about life subsequently. It became more and more evident that I had to re-think the concept ‘war’ and also what I meant by ‘postwar’.

After telling me about Elisenvaara, the caller emphasised that her mother should have received more public recognition for all the work she did as a war widow. She stressed that it was not easy to be a war widow or a child in a family with only one parent left. Her mother had worked at home before the war, but after being widowed, she had to go to work on the railroad, although their income was still low. As a child, the daughter was always hungry and her schooling did not go well, but, she added, this did not matter since later on she managed fine (she became a teacher). She ended by summarizing her feelings through an image of the 1944 anti-personnel bombs

tearing everything in her life into pieces. She used to cry out and shout in her sleep and still has nightmares about the Russian planes. I took her contact information, although I told her that I was really looking for interviewees who were war widows themselves. She understood this, but she wanted to speak for her mother, who could not participate anymore. For my own part, I could not know at that stage if all the calls or letters I would receive would be from the children of war widows. However, the rest of the phone calls were from war widows, as well as two I received later in the month. The first of these callers wanted to talk about her neighbour, and also 'just talk'. The second was widowed, but had married again quickly, and according to my judgment at that time I thought that a lengthier period of war widowhood was needed, because I was interested in the time 'after' the war.

That same evening, after Kyllikki Iloranta had phoned, I received a third call from the neighbour of a war widow. He thought that I would get an interesting interview if I phoned her. I did, and she turned out to be willing to be interviewed, which we settled to do in a month's time. It had taken four months of intensive work to actually get to talk with one war widow, Bertta Kaukinen. Now in one evening I had made two new bookings and been given relevant information concerning my research topic. I was pleased about having put the announcement in the newspaper. Nonetheless, it occurred to me that perhaps I had not been warned in vain about the possible flood of people who might respond to a public call. This worry was quickly resolved, since after the first evening there was no more rush of calls. But then again, the process turned out to be prolonged, because even three years after the newspaper announcement I was still receiving calls from people who had kept the newspaper clipping in their files, waiting for the right moment to ring me up. No calls were made which were dismissive of the subject, while the continuous problematic of the war became even more obvious from what they said.

Kyllikki Iloranta's address was, as with the two pilot interviews and the first war widow one, in an unfamiliar part of a city that I otherwise knew well. I still launched out from my drive confidently, thinking that I would find my way there, although I ended up having to use the map that I had by now learnt to have with me in the car.

This sudden newness of old ground was thought-provoking, especially since the city was not very big and I felt I should have known my way around. I was reminded of an earlier car ride, to go to what I considered to be the opening interview to the research process. This was the interview with the niece of my grandmother's, whom I knew previously as my father's cousin (it is only during this research that I have learnt to think of her as my second cousin). While I was driving through my childhood landscape, I was wondering about how I could use my memories and family history in the research. These thoughts were intertwined with driving along the familiar childhood road and observing the changes. It was a long time since I had been there and the proportions of the surrounding landscape had changed. Houses that appeared big before, felt small now; what I remembered as a lot of space, seemed diminished. In addition, I was newly positioned in the space. With grandma, I used to cycle there for visits, sitting in the carrier to her bicycle. Now I had climbed from behind her back to the front; I was in charge, driving alone, which demanded and also enabled a novel kind of gaze.

The mixture of old and new was bewildering, and it felt that I had performed some kind of rite of passage when I eventually arrived at my destination. At the time I connected the feeling to just that one occasion, brought about by the time gap and the upsurge of memories. However, when the city produced a similar kind of a many-layered sensation, a new meaning became attached to that first occasion, as well as the other interviews. These experiences were not just isolated, either. Such a diversifying of my understanding, caused by the coalition of the past and the present, became a repeated part of the research process. The feelings that I had when 'returning to my childhood landscape', and then when 'looking at my adulthood city from a new angle' were combined. That first time I started out thinking that I knew where I was heading. Uncertainty then increased. This oddly paralleled my researcher position shifting from knowing/not knowing to learning more all the time. My body took the position of a child and was certain of the direction it was heading in, but my mind was an adult's mind, busy reading all the new information and trying to sort it out. I played with the idea of physically entering this hermeneutic circle while driving: understanding anything of the meaning of what I experienced was

based on previous knowledge, whilst also what I knew from before was revealed as though for the first time in this encounter with the new aspects of reality.

Gadamer (2004b, p. 332) writes how the true historical object is not an object at all, but the unity between the one and the other, the relationship between them. This relationship is constitutive of both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding. Understanding is a historically-affected event in its own right. A lot of what I wanted to know more about had been there with me since my childhood. However, this kind of ‘fore-structure of understanding’ would not have been detected, nor would it have contributed to further understanding, unless I had posed questions concerning the past and its relationship with the present, as well as the other way around. It was fundamentally the process of asking what generated understanding. Once I began to ask, I was also relieved of the prejudice of knowing. The root cause for asking the first question had been the need to know more of war and its consequences. As Gadamer (2004a, p. 38) says, understanding begins when something addresses us. This need to know had provoked and undermined the prejudice of ‘naturally, due to family history, knowing’ something about the war. While driving to Kyllikki Iloranta’s home, and after the pilot interviews, the interview with Bertta Kaukinen, the phone calls, some reading and generally getting into the subject of war, the war as I later understood it started to emerge. This was blurred perhaps, but with a shape that had a meaning of its own, and not merely the one I had given to it and thought it had beforehand.

Furthermore, I was gradually becoming aware of the question of, how it is possible to understand. The philosopher Erna Oesch (2005, pp. 30–33) places the question of knowing and understanding at the centre of both rational and philosophical hermeneutics since Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). He started to inquire about the relationship between an individual and the general, between history and the universal, seeing an individual creative agent as involved in this. He approached this through language, since language embodies simultaneously the possibility and impossibility of understanding. Language both connects and separates people, and thus he ended up asking how it is possible then to understand. This fundamental

question was a part of my research inquiry already, because of my method of learning through other people's stories, through their language and telling, as well as through conceptualising what I had and what other people had accumulated of knowledge.

With these thoughts of a process in-progress, I rang the doorbell to Kyllikki Iloranta's apartment. I was glad to have this opportunity, as every intervention in the reality around me seemed to reveal new layers and knowing that could be detected even during a short ride through a city. Similarly, she gave the impression of being eager to do the interview, and our meeting started on a positive and productive note. We shook hands, walked to her living room, I took out the recorder and my notepad, and we started. I went straight to the matter, as I had learnt from the previous interviews that first comes the war.

JL: We are at Kyllikki Iloranta's in [this city] May 2 2001. I am here asking about a war widow and the times in question, and of the time in Karelia onwards. So, if you could try to recall at which stage you left Karelia, and did that happen several times? Then at what stage your husband [died], children [were born], and so on. It would be a kind of a basic history [of the events].

Kyllikki Iloranta: Yes. I don't remember the date, but anyway. The first time we left Karelia was 1940. This was when the Winter War ended, thirteenth [of March]. The day that I set off could be the fifteenth, or sixteenth. There were only those three days [for the evacuation].⁴⁸ I started out with the cattle. And then I went to Imatra, to Korvenkanta in Imatra. The cattle were not ours, they belonged to our parish minister, Maarala, that kind of a place. I am originally from the Kirvu county Roinila village, and this was... I was there as a labour conscript. So the original place was Roinila, Ylikuunu.

JL: Is it written with a hyphen or without?

Kyllikki Iloranta: Ylikuunu. It is a compound. At least at that time it was written [like that].

⁴⁸ According to the Moscow peace treaty, signed 12 March 1940, which declared peace starting from 13 March, the timetable for clearing the people and the troops from Karelia was thirteen days, until 26 March, with variation depending on the zone (Tanner 1940 - The Minister of Foreign Affairs Väinö Tanner speech on the radio, March 13, 1940, about the peace treaty and the severe peace terms). This timetable was held to, and Karelia was ceded empty of its people, which was a surprise to the Soviets (Hietanen 1982).

JL: Yeah, what might that be now.

Kyllikki Iloranta: I don't know at all what the name of the place is now, even though I have visited there. It has changed quite a bit.

JL: What county does Roinila belong to?

Kyllikki Iloranta: It is a part of the Kirvu county. Or even nearer to Rautjärvi. So from our home it is no more than 20 kilometres to the current border.

JL: Right, hmm. So you were working as labour conscripts in Ylikuunu. From there you left with the cattle. The cattle belonged to the minister.

Kyllikki Iloranta: The cattle was from the minister's parental home. Two of his brothers ran the house. The minister's name was Maarala.

JL: Alright.

Kyllikki Iloranta: From there we went then, this minister had a place in Korvenkanta in Imatra. All the households went there. What we had managed to take in three days. (KI 2001, pp. 2–3)

Kyllikki Iloranta only needed the second that it takes to state 'yes', and she was ready to unravel her story. In speaking for a couple of minutes, she had told of the beginning of the first evacuation in March 1940, as well as how it was in Karelia compared with now. She blended events, places and times of the past and present very efficiently. Separate stories could be made of two or three parts of what she said that represented different time levels. She began in the present tense "I don't know at all what the name of the place is now", and continued in the present perfect "even though I have visited there." A concluding remark was added in the present perfect, but with a sense of a large chunk of time covered, "It has changed quite a bit." The meaning of the sentence possibly covers the time after the Soviet Union took over in Karelia (this ceded area has not been developed or maintained properly). She also shifted from telling the past to being in the present when she needed to, "from our home it is no more than 20 kilometres to the current border."

At the beginning, choosing the tense was most likely question-induced, as my question in the present tense was answered correspondingly. However, holding together different time levels simultaneously continued throughout the interview, to the extent that it became one of the signifying elements of her approach to telling. She started by describing a past event, and, without any particular marker, glided smoothly from this to the present situation. For example, when she was answering a question about her siblings, first she included in her answer all of them, where they were and what they did during the war, how her brother was wounded in the Winter War, and how her husband attended the war; and then she added: “Now they have all died. I have nobody left. Teuvo. Their names are the same.” (KI 2001, p. 12.) The translation of this reads: ‘All my siblings have died. I am the only one left of my family. Teuvo, my first husband, died in the war. My brother is also called Teuvo.’ This particular excerpt does not as such do justice to her telling, being an exceptionally fragmentary part of it. However, even while it displays how one’s mind normally wanders while telling, the interplay of the events and times also shows how her telling extended from recounting the events, to reflecting on their meaning from the past to the present. The immediate impression I had of her telling was that it was an active process of both remembering and reflecting.

As an integral part of her technique for telling, Kyllikki Ilosaari switched between the constituents of the story and having some open ends, which left me feeling unsure about whether I was keeping pace with her. After the introductory part of her remarks, two transcribed pages, I paused to summarize and sort out what I had heard. Seemingly I had understood this, or at least she did not correct me. Instead, she came up with more information, and told the story again with some added knowledge, which was about the ownership and running of the house that she was ordered to take care of after the war had begun. It transpired that she had left out details from her earlier version to make it fit in with the rest. This practise of accumulation continued in her next answer. I asked a ‘brief and simple’ follow-up interview question about what happened next (Kvale 1996, pp. 132–133). Her productive way of telling me was well suited for this type of inquiry, allowing her to continue freely. Moreover, the question seemed to work in inducing a narrative, although I had not specifically

in advance designed 'questions pointed at narrative' (Wengraf 2001, pp. 121–127). In her answer, which was just over two transcribed pages long, she told the history of where she worked after the evacuation and how she met her future husband. In the middle of the story, she again juxtaposed the times of 'then' and 'now', and managed to reflect on time and her becoming older in a casual way. The next extract is a slightly edited version of what she said.

JL: After this, what happened then?

Kyllikki Ilosaari: I stayed there in Imatra [a city near what is now the south-eastern border]. They had these work barracks, where they gave out clothes for the migrated folks and mended their clothes. I can't remember better than this but a work barracks it was called. I didn't like it there and then I got a place in Imatra. I started to work in a house. In the autumn I went to where my mum and dad had moved. This was in a place between Pori and Tampere [Pori is a city on the west coast and Tampere in mid-Finland]. I stayed there for a couple of months. Again I found a job. I was working for a shop owner who also had a telephone centre in his house. One had to manage the telephone, be in the shop, and take care of the cattle, depending on the situation. They themselves worked in the shop, but the telephone was mostly for me to operate. I couldn't manage one anymore these days. It was a kind of a village centre. It was not very big, but it did chatter quite a bit.

Then after a couple of months a cousin of mine found work on a farm near Pori. She got a job for me, or the foreman there said that they would need more workpeople. I became a cattlegirl helper. I was there and I met my first husband. It was '40, '41. It was not called a manor, it was a farm, but it was like a manor. I was this helper to the cattlegirl. Then I became a housemaid. I took turns with everybody doing different jobs. There was time, there were three of us helpers there. I worked in the house, and I only milked the cows in the cowshed. I took turns with the cattlegirls on their days off, I was kind of compelled to work indoors, to take turns in working as a cattlegirl when they had a day off. (KI 2001, pp. 4–6)

The impression of her skill in constructing stories was strengthened by every answer. Once she started, she kept feeding into the story new aspects, thoughts, details, memories, and comments, and the end could come only much later. With Bertta Kaukinen, I had had the feeling that she said exactly what she had wanted to say and no more. Kyllikki Iloranta did not plan what she was going to say, although she knew where she was heading. In the process of telling, she saw connections and pondered

the meaning of these, which made her stories very dense, linking up with her life and history. From Penelope Lively's *Moon Tiger* (1991), referred to earlier in the thesis, Kyllikki Iloranta reminded me of Claudia, the protagonist of the novel. Claudia entertains herself with the idea of a kaleidoscopic view on life, time and history; "shake the tube and see what comes out" (Lively 1991, p. 2). Kyllikki Iloranta would have turned the kaleidoscope in a determined but slightly wondering way to see what happened. This image of producing new constellations in the pattern matched her way of telling, which was an active process of arranging life experiences. The story re-formulated itself as she kept adding, commenting, and connecting. She also had an inquiring relationship to the world around her, and while telling, she explained also to herself about what had happened and analysed the various life situations she had been involved with.

Kyllikki Iloranta included in her kaleidoscopic vision both the public and the private. The public was made hers and 'private' through the events of history. Indeed, there had been a war, and these were the consequences of it for her: this was her point of view on the past. Already in those three transcribed pages she had managed to include most of the public history of the war and post-war, without yet naming war or history. This showed up, for example, in her effortless way of comparing Karelia 'then' and 'now', when she answered my check-up question of spelling a place name, and she added a remark about the places having changed names. She knew the names in Finnish, not the new ones in Russian. With a couple of words, she had stated the consequence of a power change, a change of state, in one territory, and how that was experienced on ground level. She did not understand Russian, but she did not have to either, since she could orient herself based on her earlier knowledge of the region. The geography had stayed the same, while the language had changed. For this reason, there was no motivation for her to learn the language. She could still find her way in a familiar place, and in any case, she was only visiting. What is more, despite all the changes caused by wars, time, distance, language, state order, and political decisions, the meaning of the original home was unchangeable. In Kyllikki Iloranta's mental map, her home place was where she was used to locating it: "So from our home it is no more than 20 kilometres to the current border." (KI 2001, p.

3) In that one sentence she had told of the ceding of Karelia and the evacuation, and all of this from the perspective of the present, stating the facts.

Kyllikki Iloranta's way of zigzagging across a plentifulness of material needed narrative space. Consequently, her telling was characterized by an abundance of long stories. While listening to her, this story structure was noticeable. However, all her telling proceeded in a story form, and thus the amount of separate stories was less conspicuous while I was listening to her. The story pattern was eventually emphasized in the process of transcribing what she said, when individual stories turned out to be several pages long. In these story inserts, which in the transcript cover between 2 and 11 pages, only she spoke, not me. Altogether her interview was two hours in tape time, 105 pages transcribed pages, in which there are 19 first-person stories of a variety of lengths. Calculating the length of these is not the most relevant issue, since nearly all her answers were around half a page long, and even the shortest ones included a lot of material. Besides, in many cases she would have probably continued with her story, until I felt an urge to ask something or to comment on what she had said. However, to pick out the longer first-person sequences enhances her strong ability as a story-teller. Once she finished with one story, she carried on with a new one almost without an interruption, but mostly there was some space between two stories. The places of her stories within the interview are shown below. This is not an all-conclusive list of her stories, but it shows her telling technique. No list would do justice to the abundance of material provided by her; and this chapter dealing with her interview can only offer limited insights into the all topics she spoke about.

Story 1: pages 4–6. Work in different places during the first evacuation.

Story 2: 9–10. Returning to Karelia in-between the wars and work there.

Story 3: 13–15. Giving birth; a job in the roadworks.

Story 4: 17–27. The second evacuation; her husband wounded; work.

Story 5: 33–35. Her husband dies.

Story 6: 36–37; 37 – 43. Building a house.

Story 7: 44–45. Work and the purpose of working.

Story 8: 46–48. Different jobs; managing to find work.

- Story 9: 51–53. Plans for future with the husband; wars caused by the ruling class.
- Story 10: 54–55. Dislike of the city.
- Story 11: 57–58. Always finding a job, and wanting to have money, since childhood.
- Story 12: 59–60. Finding out about the daughters being teased in school; herself at work.
- Story 13: 62–64. Respecting children as children.
- Story 14: 67–70. Her husband knows that he will die; the funeral; mother-in-law.
- Story 15: 70–72. Her mother dies.
- Story 16: 80–81. The extended family in Sweden eating Karelian pasties.
- Story 17: 83–85. Home region trips to Karelia.
- Story 18: 89–91. Staying at home as a widow.
- Story 18: 95–97. Unpleasant experiences as a young widow.
- Story 19: 97–100. Women gossiping about her as a widow; pen friends.

Some of these stories will be discussed later in the context of Kyllikki Iloranta describing the main events in her life. However, these concentrated intervals of her talking were not only interesting as stories, but also provided space for following how she developed the events into many-faceted structures. Simultaneously, the position of an eager interviewer was less pronounced than in other interviews, and I noticed myself more and more enjoying her as a story-teller. Already during the pilot interviews and the one with Bertta Kaukinen, I had had a sense of being in the company of good performers. Bertta Kaukinen was ready for the stage, including regarding her well-groomed appearance. She had a story to recite, she was quite serious about getting it right, and after she said what she had planned to say she did not want to continue. Her style was to be organized. Kyllikki Iloranta was also very matter-of-fact, but otherwise her manner was different. She had the style of a story-teller around whom people gather, and the talk does not cease for a long while. She knew the direction she was heading in, but she had not planned all the details in advance. Her seemingly intuitive sense of a good story made her a performer. Technically mastering the whole was a part of the attraction, but the main thing for me as a listener was to get a sense of sharing a story with her. She was not only telling or delivering a story, but also sharing her life experiences while herself reflecting on what had happened. This enabled the listener in a sense to participate, and asking questions was easy under such circumstances.

In this reciprocal and intensive atmosphere, a sudden image flashed through my mind: this was not a once only situation, for a similar encounter had been repeated time again and again. There was a tradition of women gathering together, telling about their lives and learning from each other. This vision was concrete: I think I even glanced around and indeed ‘saw’ in my mind’s eye all these women emerging from the layers of history and joining us, listening to her with keen ears. I found myself wondering whether she had Karelian rune singers or lamentors among her fore-mothers. Her steady proceeding with this self-accumulative telling sounded a bit like chanting, and was quite poetic in quality. In the long speech sequences, she had time to develop a recognizable rhythm, repeated with variation from one story to another. I could imagine an audience responding to her, reacting with their bodies, nodding their heads, repeating bits of what she said.

For a Finn, Karelian laments and poetry is to an extent part of school education, dating to the national epic *Kalevala* (1835 and 1849) and its sister collection of poetry the *Kanteletar* (1840), for which Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884) collected folk lyric and laments in Russian and Finnish Karelia. Furthermore, in Women’s Studies a whole culture of women’s voices has been pointed to, that of lyrical singing and lamenting. In her research on Ingrian laments, Aili Nenola (1982) points out that women’s laments are an expression of sorrow and mourning, universally so, but also it is a part of women’s own culture of telling and sharing hardship. The culture of lamenting is known across cultures, including Finnish-Karelian, Scottish and Greek societies (see for example Rosenblatt, Walsh, Jackson 1976; Holst-Warhaft 1992; 2000, pp. 29–47). Lamenting has not died out, either. In her study of death and mourning in Russia, Catherine Merridale (2001, pp. 7–8) describes participating in a ceremony for commemorating the victims of Stalin’s regime, found in a mass grave, when suddenly before the official ceremony started women wearing black shawls threw themselves on the ground and started to lament. Their action did not look like a matter of a revived tradition for Merridale. Karelia is distant, she writes, and there are women who have never learnt the tactful Russian mourning code by a family grave. The city men coughed uneasily at the sight of the women wailing and singing,

and eventually they were moved away. Merridale (2001, p. 8) comments that the principal mourners focused upon the past, celebrating, since they were relieved when finally being able to locate and bury their dead. Under Stalin's regime, their grief had to be private. Women's lamenting had similarly been forbidden, yet as a form of expression it had not died out.

Kyllikki Iloranta's mode of expression was subdued, but the structure and the manner of her telling about coming to terms with her losses and interpreting her life joins her to a long tradition of women sharing their experiences in oral encounters (Apo 1989, pp. 176–178). Now the medium was the interview, but the meaning of the telling was unvaried, and also the encounter with Bertta Kaukinen and her story of many losses became recognizable as part of this same genre. Through our meetings, we had joined women's communities of suffering and sharing. Understanding this loss, however, needs to be put into a larger context. A war widow could be telling about her losses due to a war, but just as importantly the situation of this telling was also concerned with passing on knowledge about coping. Irma-Riitta Järvinen (1996, pp. 265–266) interviewed women in Olonets in the Karelian Republic (former East-Karelia or Russian Karelia) and concluded that being widowed was the uniting factor between the interviewees. From the point of view of these widows, even a bad marriage was better than being alone. When Järvinen was listening to these women telling about their lives, she could not help thinking that heavy and surprising experiences of life were so common in the village that the women had been compelled to develop this philosophy. Folk poetry researcher Senni Timonen has analyzed oral poet Larin Paraske's (1833/1834–1904) song known as *Lesken laulu*, The Widow's Song, in the same way I could have written about Kyllikki Iloranta's telling. Larin Paraske's 'Widow's song' was collected in 1888, just three weeks after her own husband had died. Accordingly, it had very personal overtones, which is not always the case in folk poetry. Timonen (2002, p. 40; 2004, pp. 288–297) found that at the centre of the poem was the question of individual existence. This individuality is not an isolated one, as it takes place in this world and in relation to people in it. Making up a woman who is widowed, and in the state of changing, her relationship with her singing, the terms of living, home, children,

family, the unfamiliar, the listener, oneself and finally one's death – these are the subjects for the deepest kind of contemplation in Paraske's lyrical meditation.⁴⁹

Kyllikki Iloranta positioned herself similarly in relation to the world, and so perhaps in this interview I was collecting modern widows' songs.

Work and Independence

In her story of her life as a war widow, Kyllikki Iloranta is always working. She has been the earner of the family since the war started, before her husband actually died. "My husband went to the war in 1939, almost at once when the war started. He had to stay there for nearly five years." (KI 2001, p. 12) They met in-between the wars, during the time known as the 'interim peace' (Hentilä 1990, pp. 191–196), when they were working in a farmhouse after the evacuation. They got engaged at New Year 1941, and he returned to the army on 2 January 1942. They both knew in advance when he had to leave, which was the reason for their hurried engagement. Kyllikki Iloranta had planned to return to Karelia, and getting engaged was not her first priority. "But he thought that we would get engaged and that is what we did then." (KI 2001, p. 8) In April they were married, and in early May she went back to her old family home in Karelia with her mother, after it had become possible to return. Her father had been sick and died during the evacuation, which was the reason that had delayed their return. Her husband did not join them: "He went back to the war job, to the front." (KI 2001, p. 9) In the summer he got a two-month leave to help carry out reconstruction work in Karelia. The house was in quite good shape, only the doors and windows had been removed, as well as the cowshed partly torn down. Her husband and her brother, who also got the same kind of reconstruction leave, repaired the house as well as helped generally in the voluntary effort of getting the area back into shape. "We had a little time to settle then", she said (KI 2001, p. 10). From her later story, it becomes evident that this was the only time they ever lived together in Karelia. After the second evacuation, he stayed in their new location only for shorter periods of time.

⁴⁹ Larin Paraske is regarded as the most important source of Karelian poetry; she could recite over 32 000 verses (Timonen 2004, p. 248).

Kyllikki Iloranta supported her family with the help of a monthly salary as a soldier's wife, and by having a job in the roadworks. Finding waged work in a field that was traditionally for men was a part of the wartime changes (Lähtenmäki 1999b, pp. 50–53). She continued working until giving birth the summer after returning to Karelia. The child was born small, and when she said about this in the interview, she was still wondering if this was due to her physically demanding job. A month later, her husband received leave for the christening. In her way of telling, and in her sense of life, his absence and the hard everyday circumstances were immediately counterbalanced by family life taking over. They managed to have a family row over choosing the best possible name for the first-born.

Kyllikki Iloranta: My eldest daughter was born there, in Kirvu, 24 June. And I had also then a job in the roadworks. The men brought in a load of sand. I guess I did not really have to work there, but I had this desire to go to work. They brought the sand loads to the road. The roads needed to be maintained there. It was my job to scatter that sand. That was what I was doing then until my husband came home for a leave. It was mid-June then. Teuvo said that you will then not go anymore to work there. But when he left, I still went back for a few days. I was there, I think three to four days, and then I left it. I did not manage it anymore. That job was near to us. Our foreman was there. He was called Simo Rätty. He had been a workmate to my father before. I even dared to argue with him, I said I won't come anymore. But when my daughter Pirjo was born, it took only a couple of days, and he came to fetch me, saying that surely I could go back to work. My mother was very angry and said: "Shame on you." He had no children, he was a bachelor. How could he know? She said: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself, coming to ask her to work when she has just had a baby." Then I was away from work for quite a while. Simo said that you can stay away. But I did not get any salary for the time I did not work. At that time there was no pay [for maternity leave]. I could have used the money even from that time. But then later in the autumn I went back to work. My mother took care of the child. My sister was working there in the shop. She visited us nearly every day and brought always something. Pirjo was so small when she was born, perhaps because I worked for so long. She weighed only two kilos and seven hundred [grams]. So my sister said to me: "You can't take her. Let me wash her." She bustled around with the girl all the time. She was the whole world to her.

JL: Could your husband take off time from the army to come to see her?

Kyllikki Iloranta: He could then. He got to see her when she was christened. She was then a month old. Then Teuvo came, and it was in this Jermu church where she got her name. A bus had started to run already by then, it left at six o'clock in the morning. It did not come all the way to us, the road was quite bad. We had to walk to the village centre. We lugged her all the way there. And then there was the question of her name. I said that she will be Tuula Kyllikki. But when my husband came for his leave, he said no, she will be Pirjo. So we had to compromise and have Pirjo as her first name, because otherwise the name did not fit there at all. Or Tuula Pirjo Kyllikki, I guess it would have been possible also. But Teuvo was stubborn, he said that it will be Pirjo. So, he said that if I manage to tell the priest the name Tuula, he will shout Pirjo. I did not. So we let the name be then. And she has been called Pirjo.

JL: So she was named Pirjo Tuula Kyllikki?

Kyllikki Iloranta: Yes. She has now three names. (KI 2001, pp. 13–16)

To my next question, her answer was eleven pages long (KI 2001, pp. 17–27). I summed up what I had heard so far, and asked about the continuation of her story: “1943 a child was born, she was baptised when she was month old. You went back to work, and your husband left for the army. How about from then on?” (JL 2001, p. 16). She did not pause even for a moment before answering. The story she then told was about the beginning of the second evacuation, the evacuation journey, being housed in other people's homes, and starting to work as an evacuee. In addition, her husband was wounded. When telling about these events, she was still too busy to say anything about her own feelings. She had concentrated on getting the family out of the house and holding them together at all times during the evacuation journey. Kyllikki Iloranta expressed the difficulty of leaving Karelia for the second time through her mother's sorrow. Her mother had got the flax field to flourish and she could not bear leaving it behind her again. While talking about this, Kyllikki Iloranta produced an image of a farmer having literally to cut herself off from the land that would normally provide protection and nourishment; this was an archetypal and even mythical image of a mother trying to save what she has raised.

Kyllikki Iloranta: That winter went alright [1943–1944]. In the spring my mother had sowed the seeds of flax in the field. We had to weave

such an awful lot of fabric, when in that first evacuation we lost almost all our clothes. Or we did not take with us nearly any. We had flax in the field already in forty-two. And forty-three and four, my mother sowed it again. Then the row of people started to form on the road. They came from the Ylikuunu direction, from Rautjärvi, that line started from there. The battles were terrible at that time. My mother was out in the field, weeding flax. I shouted at her from top of a rock to stop and come to the house. 'Hurry up now', I shouted, 'I will not manage packing alone.' I was so perplexed at her not coming. I did not understand then how difficult it was for her. (KI 2001, pp. 17–18)

The mother got her willpower back and returned, but they ended up rushing away in a great hurry. When they had found shelter in a barn and started to think of food, they quickly realised they had left behind their unbaked bread on the top of the oven. During the week they spent near the road waiting for transport, they returned home to bake and to take with them such things that they thought they might need. Finally they were able to leave with the last batch of people to be evacuated from the area. For her, all the worry and trouble was still a matter of listing the different stages, places and vehicles. The most troubling occasion was that they ended up being 'auctioned', meaning that the evacuees were handpicked, according to the size of the family and the possible labour they could offer, by the local people in different houses. This was the peculiarity of the evacuations in Finland: the war refugees were accommodated in private homes. Mostly everything worked out, but there was also friction (Hietanen 1989, p. 131; Hietanen 2005, p. 826), as Kyllikki Iloranta witnessed during her two evacuation journeys.

Kyllikki Iloranta: (...) We spent one night in a barge. There was a car load full of us, around I think 30 people altogether. That barge was so cramped. I could not either sit or sleep at all. My mother was holding my daughter. Then I got to sit on a suitcase. Then we came to Varkaus. We were well received. They even gave us clean clothes. We stayed there one night. Then we got to Kankaanpää, in an oxcart. Twice we had to leave it, too, because of bombing. But those old people who were travelling with us and whom I was taking care of, they refused to leave. My mother said that she will not leave either. But I said to her that I will have to look after other people, and she was needed to take care of my daughter. Then we got to Kankaanpää. We were sorted out onto different transport. First we were travelling by train, then again in an oxcart. Then we left, and there were lorries to drive to the next place. There I was in this auction. It was the most miserable moment of

my life. They called forth people according to the kind of labour they could give. My mum said to me, everybody had left by then already, and we were still sitting there, in the back, she said that you have not gone to anybody. So I said that I had not. But then a person came, I don't know if he was from the church village or from the school, and he asked if we had a place. I said that we did not, no place anywhere. He asked about what kind of people we were. I explained that my husband was in the hospital, and my brother will come if the war ends and if he can make it, and so will my sister. He said that he actually had a very good place in reserve, and that he will put us there. Once a horse comes from there, just go there and it'll take you. And there is not a person that can understand why we were such a mess. We had not slept properly, we had all been in such a rigmarole. The family was standing in front of the house. The matron was there, and the patron, and three daughters. That man was in the war. He was their son, the brother to the girls. They all came and shook hands with us and said welcome. First we could not understand how people could be so friendly. We had already seen one evacuation journey, and people then were not at all nice. Nothing really bad happened, either, but still. They asked if we wanted to go to the sauna first or to eat. They had heated the sauna for us and made the beds. So first we took a sauna and then went to eat. There was this kind of a big combined kitchen and living room in the house, and the table there, it was full of food. There was everything on it. There were many kinds of casseroles, there was bread, and milk, sour milk, all such things. I had not anymore seen in years anything like that, it looked like a feast table. (KI 2001, p. 20–24)

Her husband was wounded in the chest just before the evacuation took place. In addition, he had a got a piece of shrapnel in his eye and lost most of his eyesight in his right eye. Kyllikki managed to get to see him, but then he was moved elsewhere, because due to the fighting wounded men arrived all the time from the front. It was not clear where he would be sent to. Kyllikki returned home without knowing his location, and she was herself evacuated in two days, again without knowing where she would be evacuated to. After her second evacuation journey and settling in the friendly house, she went back to visit the farm where she had met with her husband. There she was told where he now was. The matron of the house had visited Satalinna sanatorium, where Kyllikki's husband had gone. She phoned there but he had been moved again. Eventually he was found in Kokemäki, which Kyllikki left for the same day. This was a month after they had seen each other last. Her husband had kept phoning and asking about where his family had been located, without managing to get that information.

At this point Kyllikki Iloranta (2001, p. 26) clarified that “he is not dead like that in the war, he was wounded. He died after the war.” She had not mentioned this earlier. The first time I analysed her interview, the placing of this information seemed to come quite late. Finally, it appeared to me as only logical. During that one month of separation she could not know whether he was dead and it was news to her that he was not. During this month she would probably have feared the worst; perhaps in her mind, her war widowhood had already started then. Her husband was never totally cured; and in any case, she was not alone in becoming a war widow after the war. When the war officially ended, the numbers of war widows just kept increasing, as their missing husbands were declared dead or the disabled soldiers died (Salonen 1995, p. 97). Kyllikki Iloranta’s understanding of her husband’s death was that after he was operated on and got better, he was sent to work in a car column, which eventually killed him. After two months, he was back in the hospital: “There were fumes there. Working there was not suitable at all, when his lungs were violated. (...) I still think he would have made it, if he had not been made to work there” (KI 2001, p. 33).

JL: He never recovered?

Kyllikki Iloranta: He could not recover, because there was trouble with his lungs. And using the wood gas producers was bad. It could of course be that this is only my view. (...) On fourth August he is dead. In 1947. (KI 2001, p. 34–35)

Kyllikki Iloranta’s experience of evacuation before finding a permanent home took four years. First she worked in the house where she was living, as well as on the local farms. They stayed in the western part of Finland for nearly a year. “People were quite rigid, but very friendly. When you got to know them, they were very nice”, Kyllikki Iloranta (2001, p. 29) said about this new part of the country that she had already learnt to know during her first evacuation. In 1945, they were moved to a southern town. The people here were also of their own kind (KI 2001, p. 29): “I had no harm from them, but they were a bit more rigid, prouder people.” Her brother and sister had also been placed in this town, where they were given land according to the

Land Acquisition Law (1945) as compensation for their losses in Karelia. Kyllikki Iloranta first lodged upstairs in a house that belonged to another war widow, and she also worked in this house. Her second daughter was born there.

JL: Did the father get to see this second daughter of his?

Kyllikki Iloranta: Yes. He came to us. We were then living in that small town. We had just moved to a little room. It was a temporary place. He got leave, was it a week or two? Then we moved to a little cottage, near there. There was nobody else in that house. He was there during the move, too. That cottage was made of wooden planks. The child would have frozen there. It had a miniscule stove, but not even that was warm. But it was a little better [place]. After the funeral, this Siirtoväen huolto [Care for the Evacuated Organization] would have started to repair the cottage. But I said I will not accept their offer, because I will not stay there. I had to start to work right away, and it would have been too far to go to work from there. I wouldn't have got anybody to come there, either. Where would I have put the child or children? One was four years, the other one a year and a half. But then we moved together with my mum again. We had been in separate places for two years. We had to be, because there was not enough space. We were seven in this space upstairs, which was half of this room (compared with her living-room where we were sitting). We couldn't even properly stand up there. For that reason I started to look for another place. (KI 2001, p. 36–37)

She moved in together with her mother and brother. She was happy with this arrangement and would have continued there, but then her brother got married. Before this, her brother had been like a father to her children. Now it was his own son that became his first priority. Still, even in the changed situation, he was prepared to take care of his sister's family and was angry when she wanted to move out. At first he would not even help in the work on the house, but a neighbour and a friend smoothed out the situation, after which he worked all the time in getting the house built. There were still obstacles, since there was not enough money to buy the doors and the windows. Kyllikki Iloranta had lost the social structure of her home village in Karelia, yet through her connections, some of these dating back to before the evacuation, and her reputation for industriousness, she managed to find guarantors to secure a loan. The bank director would not believe his ears when he heard that people from the biggest houses of the place supported an evacuee, whom he had first treated with scorn. She paid the loan back quickly, but she needed two

jobs to manage it, though: “It was hard. I worked for two shifts nearly.” She also struggled to keep her independence, because her brother wanted to take care of her but Kyllikki insisted in being in charge of her own life and living arrangements. Besides these matters, the following excerpt shows her precise and accumulative manner of telling. Also her memory was extraordinary, for she remembered every person by name, starting with the bank director and the bank official who went to get the director to come and meet Kyllikki, and she even managed to squeeze in comments about the whereabouts of these people even now.

Kyllikki Iloranta: (...) He took better care of the children than even their own father might have. He also helped me with whatever he could. But after his marriage he had a son, and then it was the son who went to his father after he came from work. The girls were watching this and asked, why we don't have a father. They told me to go to a shop and buy us a new father. They didn't understand that my brother did not mean anything bad, but he did not notice that the children were suffering from this. Then I took them to play in the back room, and I started to look for a place of my own. My brother was very insulted and said that next summer I would have built a couple of rooms for you upstairs. You will manage there with the children. But he was too busy, he had to earn more money. I said that I will not stay here. He wondered about the reason why and I said that you will get to live your own life, and I will get to live mine. I will manage. I will invite people to come and work with the logs to build a house. And all the people that used to be our neighbours came, they owned their houses and their farms. They asked where my brother was, as he was not unloading wood with them. So I told them not to say anything to him, because he was cross with me. So they said they wouldn't, but then a man went into the house and asked where my brother was. He opened the door to the room where he was and said that you have a tough sister. We will provide enough logs for one house, so the only thing left is to start sawing. After this my brother helped unload everything. Yeah, and then he was there building all the time, so it was him who built that little house. We thought that we would not get to live in that house of ours by Christmas, I think it was '50. We wouldn't have got to live in there yet. But then this wife to my brother, she thought of it from her point of view, and how she would get to live with her family alone. Her mother had said, she was religious, this mother, she said she will phone the matron of the Kataja house, Marja. This was the house where we had been staying, and [she would] ask her to be the second guarantor, so that I will get the money, to get the doors and the windows. I went there then. I said to her, the matron, that will you risk guaranteeing a loan for me my when I don't have a mark (the Finnish currency, before the euro). I said that everything I have has been what I have earned. Well

Marja said that is true, I would not do it otherwise, but to help you out I will do it. So I paid for the loan. I got 200,000 from the bank. I remember how I got there, it was that Hoimela. It was the Local Savings Bank, no, the National Savings Bank, where I got the loan. He was the bank director, this Hoimela. He has been dead for a while now. So Hoimela asked me what I had to say, it was that Takkila [another bank official] that got him there. I said that I had come to ask for a loan, if I could get a loan from the bank. Well, how much should it be? Quite nonchalantly, I said that it should be 200,000. Money then was like that, it is not as much now. So Hoimela said, alright, but there must be the guarantors. He said it very meanly. I said that I have the guarantors here. I gave him the paper. I said that I have all the guarantors here and I gave him the paper. This should be ready, these people have already agreed. I saw how horrified he looked to see that the matrons of the biggest houses in the village were guaranteeing a loan for me. But they were already familiar with me, one was the mother-in-law of my brother, and the other one was the matron of the place where we used to live. And since I got the state guaranteed loan pretty fast, it did not take me long, only three to four months, to pay back the loan. So I paid back the bank loan because it had the higher interest. So we got our cottage. My brother and the husband to my aunt were building the house for me. It was hard. I worked for two shifts nearly. I did a lot of cleaning in the parsonage. Koivuharju was then the dean. Then I always went to clean the council offices. There I was with my sister. This sister of mine, too, Lyyti, she got married after [the war], had three children, was expecting the third one, when the husband died. They were living in the north, and then they came here. We were a bit like fellow sufferers. My mother took care of the children. (KI 2001, p. 38–43)

Immediately after her husband died, she went to ask for a job in a local wool factory. She did this on Thursday, and by the following Monday she had started. Cleaning was the second shift that she mentioned in the extract above. She worked in the factory from six to half three, came home to eat, and went to her other jobs. Kyllikki Iloranta provided income as a single mother for two children and an elderly mother, the way she had done already during the war. Satu Apo (1993, pp. 142–143) has written that the Finnish cult of work and owning a private house belongs to women as well as men; a mother redeems this home through saving ferociously and working in two places simultaneously. Kyllikki Iloranta had two or three jobs to support the family and to get a house paid for. To this already existing matrix of work, in which women fully participated in economically care-taking of the family, the war contributed its own part. Already before the war, the number of women working in

industry was internationally a high one, but the war opened doors to fields that had been mostly occupied by men, such as the heavy metal industry and the war industry, even when women's salaries stayed lower (Lähteenmäki 1999b, p. 52). During the war, over half of the industrial work force was women. War also contributed to women's more visible role in politics (Pohls 1990; Satka 1993, p. 68; Ilmonen 1998, p. 156).

Despite these developments, women were still encouraged to stay at home after the war, when men returned to their work. Indeed, motherhood and family became praised even to the point of there being a cult of the home (Jallinoja 1984, p. 60) throughout the Western world, as well as in Finland (Weedon 2004, p. 4). In 1950, women's share of the Finnish labour force had returned to the pre-war level of forty per cent. It was still high a figure. Many wanted to continue working, and many had no other choice (Satka 1993, p. 70–71). In Britain, it has been debated what it was that women wanted, after they had been a part of workforce during the war (for example, Summerfield 1998, p. 199; Summerfield 2000, pp. 13–14). I have not been able to find statistics on the percentage of the Finnish war widows having jobs, but it is known that the war widow pension was low compared with the cost of living (Salonen 1995, pp. 14, 19–20, 97); material stringency was a concern for war widows elsewhere, too (Damousi 1999, p. 148). This was very evident when I was reading the war widow pension applications in the State Treasury later in the research process. Clearly Kyllikki Iloranta did not think that she would be able to get by with just the war widow pension. She mentioned the state benefit only a few times, and then she referred to using it the name 'war-time monthly salary', which was paid while the men were in the army. She never used the words war widow's pension. As a regular income, it offered some basic security at least, when the hours of work in the factory could go down. She was also willing to take care of her mother at home when she got older, and thought that the monthly pension would contribute towards this.

There were moments when Kyllikki Iloranta thought that life could be about something else than work:

JL: How was the general atmosphere? What kind of a role did you have? You were very young, right? Did you think of yourself as a war widow? Or did you reminisce how it was, or did you ever think of how life would have been, if you had had a man. Did you have time to think of this, or did you just have a lot of work?

Kyllikki Iloranta: Many times I did. Such a thing occurred to me, that there could be at least a little something else in life than work. I never went anywhere those days. It was only work. (KI 2001, p. 89)

Sorrow and Changed Plans

Working in different jobs in the textile industry turned out to be Kyllikki Iloranta's life career. However, a job in a factory was not the kind of work that she would have originally chosen: "I was never interested in working in a factory. But I still spent all my life doing such work" (KI 2001, p. 56). Instead, she would have wanted to continue in farming: "I was born and raised in the countryside, it was fifteen kilometres to the railway station. Perhaps it has left its stamp on me, in the way that it has always interested me more" (KI 2001, p. 56). Already at an early age, she had started to work in the neighbouring farms. She was saving money for a school to become a cattlegirl. Her family could not afford to educate her. When the war started, these plans were interrupted. After the evacuation, she met a boy who wanted to marry her. "When I got married then all that went", she sighed and perhaps referred to pursuing an education (KI 2001, p. 56). After a year she was a mother and a landless war refugee again, too. In this case, the dichotomy between what she planned and how it turned out to be could hardly be avoided. The same set-up was repeated several times in her life and led to many compromises. This balancing in life was mirrored in her way of telling, which was one continuous 'refiguration' of her life events (Ricoeur 1984; Ricoeur, in Kearney 2004, p. 160). Such refiguration was caused by two reciprocal elements. War and the losses it caused continued to affect her life as long traces at all levels, and her ability to reflect on the consequences of war made her story telling of the changes. Besides war, there were also many other sources of changes in her life.

It has to be noted that giving up farming and working in a city might have happened even without the war, as in the 1950s Finland experienced a large-scale migration to its cities and also to neighbouring Sweden. The small farms that were established in the aftermath of the war, when loss of land in Karelia was compensated, did not provide enough income. In 1950 half of the labour force worked in agriculture, but by 1960 this figure was only twenty-eight percent, and in 1975 a job in farming involved only thirteen percent of the labour force (Alapuro 1985; Alestalo 1985; Alestalo 1986; Snellman 2003, pp. 12–17). ‘The Great Migration’ stretched from regional and cultural changes to lifestyle patterns (Jokinen & Saaristo 2002, pp. 146–148). Kyllikki’s husband had had dreams of driving a taxi. Kyllikki said several times during the interview that she did not even like cities, yet she had been compelled to leave the countryside. The first time was due to war, her sister had already by then started work in a city and Kyllikki went to her: “I was terrified by the city. The first time I left [because of the evacuation] my sister got me a job in a cotton factory. She was sharing a small room with another girl. They were both smoking cigarettes. I almost threw up when I got there. I asked what the smell was. Then I noticed that it was tobacco. I have always been a bit of a country person. And slightly dumb. It had never even occurred to me to smoke. So I said to my sister that I won’t stay. She got really angry, she was quite fierce when she was young. She said that I’ve now got a job for you and what will I say to the foreman, when you won’t come. I said say whatever, but I can’t stay, not against my will. I have never been interested in city places. That is the reason for why we live now here, a bit outside the city centre” (KI 2001, pp. 54–55). In the last sentence here she refers to having moved in 1964 from a small town to a nearby bigger city to look for work, which she found in a textile factory.

JL: How about you moving from the countryside, when you had a farm in Karelia, and then you were also working on the farms around there. You left because of the evacuation and then got soon married. I was wondering if you made somehow different choices or do you think you would have worked in similar jobs as you have had. Or was finding work more based on what one could get?

Kyllikki Iloranta: I have always liked work on the farms. That is the reason why I went to work on the farm where I met my husband when we were evacuated. This was a must, this wool factory. I liked it there, alright. I had to, a person cannot do something that one doesn't want to do at all. It was somewhat okay there. But if I had a choice, I would have worked with farming.

JL: What about Teuvo? Did you have time to speak with him about what he wanted?

Kyllikki Iloranta: He always dreamt of driving a taxi. Something that had to do with cars, they were his hobby. But then he had to be there, he was that young, where ever they needed men [in the war]. He wasn't at all interested in farming and such. In that way we were a bit different.

JL: How do you think it would have worked out in practice? (KI 2001, pp. 49–51)

In answering my question about whether she thought they would have lived in the country or in the city, she started to reflect on their chances as a man and woman together sharing their lives, as a married unit and family, instead of thinking where they might have lived. Her answer was much more sophisticated than my question, and I do not think it would have occurred to me ask such a question, thinking it too intrusive. For her, a question about practical arrangements was still a hypothetical one, and thus probably quite uninteresting. First of all, it was an impossible question for her to answer. She knew the changes that had taken place in her life, but she could not know what would have happened, if there was no war and her husband had not died. Consequently, she chose to contemplate generally what it is that happens to people when there are changes and especially when there is a war. She included in her vision her relationship and that this was meant to be for life, having to leave her home, visiting again her home place that was left over forty-five years before, and generally, the politics. In her coda to this, she concluded that people were trying to live their lives even while the changes surged over them. The same applied for all of those affected, whatever 'side' they were on. Judging by the consequences in everyday life, it was the same war for everybody.

Kyllikki Iloranta: I think we would have made it in practice. Or rather I don't know what to say about it. In any case, when he came on leave,

and we had also some other times together, it was always really good between us. It was that I came to think of when Teuvo died. I had a former girlfriend who had three children, who sent two of her children to be evacuated to Sweden. Of course it was a good solution, because here it was war. It wasn't so good between them otherwise either. He [her husband] had been working in Imatra. He was a good friend to my brother. He was working there too, in Imatra, I can't remember what he was doing there. Then she fled to Sweden. She brought all her stuff to us. I said that how could she not lose a husband, when they were always quarrelling and saying things to each other. Then I felt some bitterness. But I have been able to get by, I am not anyhow [bitter], not even because of leaving Karelia. Like our neighbours, they never went anywhere there. I have visited back home maybe nine or ten times, there in my home place. But I don't feel [bitterness]. People there are like here. They say there is more crime there than in Finland, but people there are just ordinary, nice and sweet. They are no more alien people. And it is not their fault, the ones in power are to blame when there are wars. So I am not bitter at all. (KI 2001, pp. 51–53)

The cited answer above, as well as the whole experience of listening to Kyllikki Iloranta, in particular her manner of working out from her own experience, telling as an act of condensing, including and expanding, thinking of her own life as well the lives of others, the choices that she made and that she could not make, all gave the impression that she had worked intensively in considering the questions of the past. This found its expression as a dense interplay between suffering, sorrow, action and memory. Ricoeur (in Kearney 2004, p. 152) comments on Freud speaking about patience, in regard to the work of memory and that it takes time to reach the level of 'words as free association'. Kyllikki Iloranta admitted having felt bitterness on various occasions, but had eventually reached a state when she was at least herself convinced about not being bitter. In *Mourning and Melancholy*, Freud distinguishes between mourning as 'working out' and melancholy as 'pathological mourning' (Freud 1957 [1915], pp. 244, 246, 250). In one way, Kyllikki Iloranta's rich associative way of telling exemplified this 'working out'. However, Freud also implies that mourning and melancholy stay in a very complex relationship to each other; there is not one without the other (Freud 1957; LaCapra 2001, p. 67; Eng & Kazanjian 2003, pp. 3–5). Regarding Kyllikki Iloranta's narrative, it appears that mourning and melancholy did not have sharply separate outlines. Ricoeur (in Kearney 2004, pp. 158–160) suggests adding "suffering to acting, sorrow to praxis",

which I think is very close to expressing what Kyllikki Iloranta managed to articulate through her telling.

I have provided a lengthy insert to show what is entailed by this permanent interplay of mourning and melancholy in Kyllikki Iloranta's narrative. First her story runs as praise for her mother and how women help each other out, as well as a description of how difficulties were tackled through work, and eventually other shades are added to the whole, for focusing on work and managing was only one side of the story. The other side told about a difficult and prolonged process of trying to come to terms with sorrow, which was combined with a struggle to manage in her role as a widow and a single woman with children and few resources other than her capacity for hard work.

Kyllikki's husband got leave from the hospital where he was being nursed for his lung problems. During this visit he told his mother-in-law that this would be his last time home and he asked her to help his young wife with the children. Kyllikki found out about this conversation only afterwards, but already at the time she had wondered why her mother had looked as if she had been crying after talking with him. While telling me how she learnt about the agreement between her husband and her mother, Kyllikki Iloranta conjured up a powerful scene which took place between her, her mother and her mother-in-law. The latter was visiting her son's family shortly after the funeral, when the two grandmothers ended up having a discussion on the responsibilities of generations, as well as the effects of war. As a part of this conversation, Kyllikki's mother revealed her promise to her son-in-law. Previously in the interview, we had been talking about Kyllikki's participation in the Union for the Families of the Deceased. In their regular Sunday meetings, financial assistance was among the subjects that were discussed, because one of the aims of the organization was to help widows to manage economically (Salonen 1995, pp. 21–24). Kyllikki Iloranta described other people's attitudes to the monthly war widow allowance. I wanted to find out more about her own situation, and I asked her a twofold question about income generally and her mother. At that stage it had not become evident if her mother was working at home or elsewhere, which would have

meant two salaries. She attached her answer to the larger picture of the meaning of her mother. She acknowledged fully what her mother had done, yet she also said that it would have been good if her husband had told her more about his condition, as well as to her mother.

JL: How about the means of support otherwise. Was your mother also working elsewhere or did she stay at home with the children?

Kyllikki Iloranta: She was at home all the time with the children. She never had a job again working outside the home [after the evacuation, or after Kyllikki's husband died?]. We both had a cow. I was staying in this small cottage, my mother was not living with us then. The cows were two kilometres away, where she lived, and I went every morning and evening to milk the cow. If I did not, then my mother milked my cow, or I could milk them both. My husband was visiting then. It was spring in forty-seven. Teuvo said that I could milk both cows and asked my mother to stay. But when I came back from milking the cows, my mother was kind of strange. I thought that she been crying. Teuvo assured me that everything was fine, we were talking about all sorts of things, he said. Teuvo was the type who never wanted to make me sad. When my mother left, I asked again what they had been talking about, as I thought that she had cried. I was wondering if he had said something inappropriate. I would not say anything like that to mother, he said. Well then, I heard only after he had died [what had happened]. My mother-in-law came for a visit. My mother was there as well, I think it was after the funeral. My mother-in-law had been to the funeral, too. My mum commented on my energy in bustling around with the children. My mother-in-law said that when one has founded a family, it is up to this person to take care of the children. My mother said that it is not quite like that, the young ones need to be helped, and children, since the children are the innocent in wars. Besides, she has promised Teuvo to take care of the children. Right away it occurred to me about the earlier time and I asked my mother if it was this thing that they had been talking about. She admitted it and said that Teuvo had told her that he will not have another leave, that this will be his last one. Grandma's style was a bit rigid. She is dead now. We had no disputes. She was a bit different, and the Karelians are perhaps quite fond of their extended families.

JL: Your husband had thought then that he was not well?

Kyllikki Iloranta: Well, he knew it. I guess he had been told that he will not make it. But he did not say it to me. I think he could have said it to me. (KI 2001, pp. 67–70)

In her short comment about her mother promising to help with the children, Kyllikki chose to present this as due to the Karelian tradition of caring for the extended family, often referred to in comments about 'how the Karelians are different' from the rest of the Finns (Sallinen-Gimpl 1987, p. 197; Sallinen-Gimpl 1994, p. 88). To me, her comment reads as making use of stereotypical notions of 'Karelianness'. Later in the interview, she said about her having arranged to care for her mother at home until the end. "I said that even if we only have this monthly war salary, we'll somehow get by", and she referred to some periods when she did not get full pay from the factory, yet decided her allowance was enough to support the family. "There is no way I could have taken my mother to a care home after her minding the children ever since their childhood", she continued (KI 2001, p. 73). In this light, both her mother's and her own behaviour identify concrete actions and attitudes as part of their stance towards loss and sorrow: instead of melancholy or 'succumbing to fate', they chose work and care.

While telling of her life, Kyllikki Iloranta kept stressing that she just wanted to stay at home and not go anywhere, after she became a widow. She repeated that she simply had no desire to seek company. However, after this she mentioned that she had just turned twenty-five when her husband died; he was twenty-six years of age. She did not comment on this otherwise, but it was hard not to think of it as her commenting on a normal life ending when she was very young. Indeed, after a while she started to add some contradicting details to the version that her solitude was an entirely voluntary choice to stay at home and not want to find another partner. First she mentioned that she had more or less explicitly promised her mother to restrain from looking for other company. Then it also became clear that she had been under scrutiny from her neighbours and others, although she claimed that she did just what she wanted. Her status as a war widow was not helpful in gaining respect, after all. If any man came to her house this led to gossip, including when it was a brother or a cousin visiting her. In such situations, her mother also became involved in defending her. As a single woman, she was also vulnerable to physical attacks, which might have made her even more careful in showing any signs of interest in company. At work, she was regarded as ready for another marriage by a colleague who often

waited for her to end her shift. He had plans to combine their families, with Kyllikki staying at home minding their children, while he wanted to pursue a career as a sailor. She had pen friends, because “somewhere it was necessary to unwind one’s thoughts” (KI 2001, p. 99); and some of these people she also met. Together with the above extract from her interview, the following passage illuminates how Kyllikki’s telling slowly reveals the contradicting factors in her life. She stayed a widow for sixteen years. She met her second husband when she was out dancing for only the second time after becoming a widow.

JL: Why did you not go out?

Kyllikki Iloranta: I never felt like it. I did not have proper clothes either. The others would wonder about me going there. I never felt like wanting to go out. Few might believe what I am saying but it’s the truth. (...) My sister was encouraging me to go out with her. I said I will not go. When I don’t feel like it, why should I. I had just turned 25 or six. I was 25 when I was widowed. Teuvo was 24 years of age. (KI 2001, pp. 90–91)

(...)

JL: After the war, you said that for example in the factory where you worked, there were three or four war widows. Was there some kind of a widow role for you? What did you think, or did anybody ask you about having been married? How was it about the widow of a war hero, to have one’s man died in the war?

Kyllikki Iloranta: In any case, nobody thought we had any greater worth, nearly always that they looked down on us. At least to me, it happened that men thought that I was in need of company. Once a neighbour came, Teuvo was then still alive, he was in the hospital. I wondered why this man came so late, it was around half eight pm. He would not leave. I said that I had a cow, and a lamb, a pig, and I said I will have to go to see to that lamb. I took my girl in my arms and thought to let the man stay there then. I did not feel good, not really. He would not leave. And he was even one of our own neighbours, from Karelia. He came to the door then, and put his hand in front of the door. He said that we would not go out yet. Then he started to take my hand. I asked what he was trying to do, really. He said that it was long since I had a man in the house and he said to me that I should go with him. I put the girl on the floor and I boxed him on the ear. There you go, and there, and over there I have a stick. He still would not go. He attacked me, I was struggling to get free and the girl started to scream. I had neighbours quite near, so I don’t think that anything else would have

happened, but I said that I will start to shout right away. So then he left. Something like that happens, [it is thought], anybody can get a woman like this. But then there was this one thing. If I may praise myself, or not even praise but just say directly that I never desired to be in the company of men. Perhaps I had so much work or something else to think about. But then the children left and I noticed that I was totally alone when my mother died. And I had promised that I would not, in any case, before [-], but when my mother died, then I can start to look for some company. And it happened, so nicely. Veikko is a widow, the same way [I am]. But most men see it like this, that a widow is an easy catch.

JL: What about women?

Kyllikki Iloranta: Women seem to think that it means that she will go with anybody. (...) (KI 2001, p. 94–97)

Reinhardt Koselleck (2004, pp. 254–275) suggests a permanent tension between what he calls the ‘space of experience’ and the ‘horizon of expectation’. The space of experience refers to the past made present, and the horizon of expectation to the future made present (Koselleck 2004, p. 259). It is in this intersection of past and future where Kyllikki Iloranta’s telling has its crux. It is also the source of some kind of fundamental problem in her life, although this does not mean that she is unhappy. Life is just complicated, and one would want a bit more than may be possible. One of the most telling scenes of this double effect in both her life and how her story expresses it is her description of her wish for a perfect home. One purpose of all her extra jobs was to pay for the education of her daughters, since she herself had not been able to study. This was also an investment in her own future, as it was going to lead to the situation of everything being perfect again. This dream, however, was never realized, because new changes happened. While Kyllikki talked about her ideal home, a neat and perfect place, she glanced without focus around her own very nice and orderly living room. I am not sure if she was actually looking at the room where we were, but something in her look gave me the impression that something of her project home was missing. At the end of the interview, she returned to idea of building a home by referring to books that she did not feel that she could buy or order, because she had been always struggling with money. She admitted that she could maybe do so now, but she had developed the habit of spending as little as possible, and besides, she was helping out her own children.

Kyllikki Iloranta: (...) I had always dreamt of the girls going to school and having an education. Then we would have more money and we could make our home nice and neat. I have always liked it when places are in order. But then they married young. (KI 2001, p. 45)

Kyllikki Iloranta was not the only one in her family who was engaging with their past because of my research. When her older daughter learnt about the interview, she told her mother how they had been teased at school, mostly because of them coming from Karelia, but partly about them being fatherless. Kyllikki was very upset about this piece of information. If the girls had told her about their difficulties, she would have gone to school to talk with the teacher. The phenomenon of teasing was as such known to her, including from her own work, and she had talked about it at home. In her case, it was connected to her being Karelian as well as a war widow.

Kyllikki Iloranta: (...) Of course I had talked at home about being called a 'Ruskie' in the wool factory. There were some people like that, and there were the nice ones, too. But once a day this word 'ryssä' [Ruskie] was heard. It was said that the Karelians took all the dwelling places and apartments and jobs. But these things could not really be connected, since at that time there was a lot of work. This could more accurately be said now [because of unemployment]. Now that generation is nearly gone. I was 17, not even yet 18, when we left the first time.

(...)

I don't think there was one day passed without my being called names. But I had to go to work, and I could not lend my ear to such comments.

JL: And you had some nice colleagues, too?

Kyllikki Iloranta: Yes, some really nice ones. I had the friends that I have liked and thought that I wouldn't need more.

JL: What was it about this name 'Ruskie', when transferred to mean the Karelians. What did you think yourself? Was it that they had been given too little information? But it had to be clear to everybody that nobody could stay there, or was it just that a gear had got stuck?

Kyllikki Iloranta: I think so, it was malice and ignorance. I wonder if all the people know even now? I have tried to follow how it was, I have some books and such. Even to me, who has experienced it herself, I must say that there are many things I find hard to believe. (KI 2001, p. 60–62)

Eventually, she even tried to speak less in the Karelian dialect: “I tried to make sure that I was not too Karelian” (KI 2001, p. 76). She also avoided telling where she was from, if she was not asked. These precautions were needed, since it was hurtful to be the target for contempt:

Kyllikki Iloranta: (...) I didn't say where I was from if I was not asked. It would have only made me feel bad. In a bigger group of women, there can be some dispute. Always one person manages to say something. It had to do with the contempt for the Karelians.

JL: What did you mean when you said that it made you feel bad?
Kyllikki Iloranta: It was this tone in their voice. I tried not to say anything about Karelia. That's why I lost my dialect when I was at work.

(...)

You know, it never leaves you, when what is this 'Ruskie' doing here with the others has been said about you. It does make you feel bad, when you are there. (KI 2001, pp. 76–77)

After the period when she was silent about being a Karelian, she did not have to hide her origin again. In the interview she spoke Finnish in the Karelian dialect, which is something that I am not skilled enough to convey in English, unfortunately. One part of her 'going public' about her roots was her later active relationship with the ceded area. Since the opening of the border, she had participated about ten times in trips back to the home region. These trips were made in a positive spirit. The expressions she used to describe them were ones such as 'having fun', even though everything left from the Finnish period was in ruins. The family, especially her mother, had planned to return until the late 1950s, but then her mother too ceased to talk about a possible return. The discussion about Karelia and how it should be given back to Finland can at times be quite heated, but Kyllikki Iloranta seemed content with the way things are.

Kyllikki Iloranta: (...) We had such fun there on the hill, even though there were no buildings. It was enough just being there in the yard. Every summer we saw something new. Yet I must say that when we left home, or left, I had tears in my eyes. These trips have always been really rewarding. I don't think of it with bitterness, and I would not

return, that is for sure. I am too old for that. It is nice just to visit there. Where we had the post box, it was a kilometre to our place. When you walk down from that you see that the view is exactly the same. All the fields are just hay now. There are no trees. It is a miracle that the trees don't grow in a field. We had just newly-started fields. It is a big forest now. (KI 2001, pp 84–85)

Despite her matter-of-fact attitude about Karelia, it was in relation to her home and time there, or simply her childhood, that Kyllikki Iloranta took up the issue of memory particularly: “When I think back, I always remember everything the way it was then. Sometimes I dream, it is not so long ago when I had this dream about having got lost in the forest and the whole village was out looking for me. I was there by a stone” (KI 2001, p. 91).

Kyllikki Iloranta ended her interview in exactly the same way that Bertta Kaukinen had. She started to look for a photograph, not of my grandmother as Bertta had, but of her deceased husband. However, when she picked up the photograph, she looked very perplexed for a while. She was looking at the photograph of her present husband, which she had lifted up in some kind of metonymic transfer. In a similar way, Bertta Kaukinen had looked at her wedding ring, before she suddenly realized that it was a long time since she had worn her first ring. In that flash of a moment, the three times which I mentioned in the chapter on ‘Narrative’s Long Exposure’ were made concrete: present past, present present and present future, were each and at the same time made visible.

Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka

Introduction

The reason for a joint chapter concerned with the interviews with Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka lies in the fact that the themes of land, loss and what is made of such loss coincides so much in their tellings. Due to something they could not affect or control, the war, they both lost land that had been cultivated by their families and their extended families for generation after generation. After the war, they both

decided to start a new farm from a scratch. This process involved a series of other changes, as they became settlers and small farmers instead of cultivating ancestral land, which in both their cases had been above the average size. However, examining parallel phases in the lives of these two war widows does not mean that they are categorized as ‘the same’. The connections between them are thematic. To write of two women in outwardly similar life situations without it starting to sound like comparing similarities and differences between them is challenging, but the risk is taken for the sake of gaining a wider angle on the issues involved. Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka both started a new farmstead, in Finnish called a ‘*kylmä tila*’, a ‘cold farm’, in different parts of the country, outside the centres already there. The reference to ‘cold’ meant that they acquired a plot where there were no buildings or fields ready. Such farms were common in the situation when the evacuated Karelians, as well as soldiers, were allowed land, either in the form of a small housing plot in the cities or in conurbations areas, or else as a new farm, which was mostly in remote areas.

Previously, I noted that Kyllikki Iloranta built a house on one of the compensation plots in a small city. Radical settlement laws had already been implemented in Finland in the 1920s and 1930s, and they formed the basis for reacting quickly to the large-scale resettlement required after the wars (Hietanen 1982, pp. 47–66; Kupiainen & Laitinen 1995, pp. 42–46). Following the Winter War, The Prompt Settlement Act was enacted for the assistance of the displaced persons in 1940, but when the war re-started in 1941 its application ceased. The ceded area was regained. Less than a thousand Karelians (out of 8000 already agreed cases, and plans for more) stayed on their new farms; the rest went back to rebuild their old farms in Karelia (Hietanen 1989, p. 251).

Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka returned to Karelia between the wars, but they had to leave again in June 1944. The devastating news leading to this was that the terms of the armistice in 1944 gave over one-tenth of cultivated land to the Soviet Union. Consequently, in 1945 the previous law of rapid settlement was modified as The Land Acquisition Act (Laitinen, 1995), to provide homes and income for refugees

and returning soldiers. State-owned or private land was requisitioned; around a quarter of this was through compulsory purchase, which did not make things easier for the settlers. Despite some Swedish-speaking areas, the whole population provided homes for the displaced Karelians. Altogether some 2,781,366 hectares were used to provide land for housing and farming. Karelians were also compensated for their lost ownings in obligations which were a warranty recompensating the lost properties to their full value. Around 700,000 people, with family members included, were a part of this settlement scheme; the focus was in the countryside (Hietanen 1992, p. 311; Hietanen 2005, pp. 833–834; Kirby 2006, p. 287). Both Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka turned down the first offers of housing made to them, because these were not suitable for life with small children. Kyllikki Iloranta had done similarly for the same reason. Later Sylvi Ahola bought a piece of land with the compensation money she received and Helmi Parikka accepted an offer for a land plot.

For me as a researcher as well as a private person, questions concerning the meaning of land intertwined with its loss, and the tough reconstruction period following the war are of particular interest. My grandmother, a war widow and the sole caretaker of the family, shared a house with her mother and sister, and similarly lost a family farm on the Karelian Isthmus and acquired a new one in the South of the country. This place is now taken care of by me. The ‘third generation’ point of view is also involved in what it meant to lose an ancestral home, work and status, and furthermore, a community. None of this possible knowledge is a ready-made reserve, it is work-in-progress that has diversified in the process of this research.

Sylvi Ahola was ninety years of age and Helmi Parikka eighty-six when they were interviewed, and both were very energetic and precise. Sylvi Ahola felt that her speech was affected and she stuttered after a period of sickness, and Helmi Parikka was strained by a very warm day, as I was too. Nonetheless, both engaged in thorough and detailed descriptions of their lives down to the smallest details in the interview sessions. Sylvi Ahola talked for two hours and thirty minutes, which is in transcript 157 pages. Some questions were also answered by her son, but he wanted the tape-recorder switched off. Helmi Parikka’s interview lasted for two hours, and

became ninety-two pages of transcript. Altogether my visit with Helmi Parikka lasted for about four hours, with a tape recorder breakdown and a lunch pause, when she wanted to offer a lunch in the canteen of her old-age housing complex.

The analysis of these two interviews is divided into sections, as with the previous interviews. The order of these follows roughly how interpretation has come about in this research. Phase one introduces the interview situation both before and during the encounter, as well as some factors that may have influenced it. The focal point is how the interview starts to mould into a story of a person's life and on what in that story attention is paid to first. Phase two is concerned with presenting the main points of the story told, some aspect of which have already come up in phase one, but now with an added awareness of the whole. Phase three brings together the first and second phase readings, exploring my chosen analytical themes in the readings.

In the encounters I had with Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka, I was pulled into a world of listening to war stories, of the first day of the war as well as of the evacuations. The interview interaction was very much directed by them, in line with the previous interviews. The main elements in the narratives which were of particular significance for the two women concentrated on them becoming settlers and starting a new farm. Around the chosen analytic themes that have emerged from the material, for Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka, the focus is on the sense of a mixture of seriousness, kindness and humour that prevailed when they were telling of lives that were patterned with hardship and change. This attitude and device for telling was read by me as an expression of getting on with loss, which is also one of the broader analytic themes of the research. And one of my 'thought zones', concerning the pictures that were presented earlier and have been used for thinking through the themes of the research, found a counterpart in a story told by Sylvi Ahola. Specifically, I recognised in the photograph of seven young women in a meadow somewhere around my grandmother's house my grandmother and her sister but I did not know about the others. Sylvi Ahola had one possible version to tell, concerning a group of her girlfriends in her home village.

Ruthellen Josselson (2004, 2007) points out that Ricoeur's early writing distinguishes between a hermeneutics of faith and a hermeneutics of suspicion: the researcher attempts to privilege the voice of the participant, by trying to render the meanings as presented in the interview, or else the researcher strives to read beneath this for meanings that are hidden, either unconscious or embedded nearly invisible in cultural context. Concerning Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka, the proposed distinctions between them are not tensions in interpretation, but concern the necessary condition for interpretation and also the method for reading the interview materials. Ricoeur's proposal of interpreting with 'faith versus suspicion' is translated into cross-reading and blending the interviewee and researcher viewpoints.

War Stories

Sylvi Ahola was introduced to me on the phone by her neighbour, who after reading my newspaper announcement was convinced that she would have a lot to say about war widowhood. I phoned her at once. Sylvi Ahola's son answered the phone and passed it on to his mother, which was nice, since I had experienced some phone calls stopping with the 'gate-keeper'. We had a short conversation, she wanted to participate, and we agreed to meet in two weeks. Before the drive to her home, I spread a map on table and started to locate her whereabouts. The area where she lived in the Uusimaa county in Southern Finland was vaguely familiar, since I had been there a lot as a child visiting my cousins. I still got lost on my way and had to ask for directions. However, I realized that I was not quite unprepared for this incident, but recognized a similar kind of a moment of perplexity to that I had gone through during my journeys to the previous interviews. As explained previously concerning Kyllikki Iloranta, this phenomenon of certainty alternating with uncertainty had started to feel a part of the research process. In consequence, a month and a half later when I drove to meet Helmi Parikka I knew to expect that I would drive around for an extra hour before finding her address. When I arrived in the small city where Helmi Parikka had her old-age apartment and realized that I had been lost, I could not help smiling. I had overcome some fears, at least; I knew I would eventually reach the destination.

The uncertainty with the route to Sylvi Ahola changed to certainty when I drove in her yard. It was typical of a farmhouse yard, at least those that I knew from my childhood. There was a large central area surrounded by outbuildings, all in good order. Arriving in this enclosed space was for me attached to pleasant feelings of summer holidays and weekends. Stepping into the house was also in a way recognizable, with its small glass veranda, geraniums on the window sills, a door again, long narrow rag rugs on the floors, a large kitchen with a sizeable baking oven. This was a type of house that I knew before entering. The thing is to go in, without waiting outdoors for somebody to come to open the door but making enough noise for the people inside to realise that somebody is coming. It went without saying to close the door carefully behind me, not letting the flies in. I raised my voice for a salutation when I went through the door, although I was sure I had been noticed driving in and stepping into the house. Sylvi Ahola was waiting for me in the kitchen, accompanied by her middle-aged son. We exchanged some general words about the drive and the landscape. He stayed around for a while and then went somewhere else in the house. Sylvi Ahola shared her house with her son's family. I set up the interviewing gear, we sat down by the kitchen table and started. She was ready to talk without a period of preparing or small-talk, as had been the case with the previous interviewees. She did not mind being recorded. From the conversation we had, I got the impression that she had been interviewed before, at least for a book on the village that she was from (books of the 'lost villages' produced by Karelian village societies are a popular genre in Finland).

The transcribed text version of our talk might initially give a formal impression, as we both addressed each other formally at the beginning. This was a continuation from the first contact with her on the phone. The tone of our discussion was casual, however. For Sylvi Ahola, using 'You' was a natural part of her language, and not a matter of hierarchy or distance. I am not saying that formal address is a sign of distance under any circumstances, since mostly it is of course just good manners. I am trying to convey that her way of addressing me did not depend on us being strangers to each other, and the way I addressed her was not because of her being

older. Her ‘You’ personified her attitude to the world. She showed this in her manner of talking dignity and kindness, which, based on the examples she told, she also practised in life. Simultaneously, she was the most down-to-earth and easy-going person I had met in a long time. Gradually during the interview, the practise of formal addressing varied with unspecified third person and the Karelian dialect ‘sie’ for ‘sinä’/‘you’.

Our conversation started by me noting the place and the date of the interview on the tape, for the purpose of keeping a record. I proceeded to her name, but did not get further than the first name. She took over and inserted her middle name, without the last name. I had not heard the middle name before but it reminded me of a name that the person who phoned me about Sylvi Ahola said that she also was called. It was not planned, but I continued by stating that she had been called ‘Leena’ before. She was taken by surprise. She wanted to know how I knew that name. After my second interview question, our roles were already reversed: she was asking, I was answering.

JL: We are in Sylvi Ahola’s home and it is Monday twenty-first [May 2001]. And Your name is Sylvi...

Sylvi Ahola: Sylvi Anna-Leena is my whole name.

JL: And You have been called Leena before?

Sylvi Ahola: How did You know this?

JL: This source of mine, the one who phoned me and said that You would be an interesting person to interview, he said your first name, Sylvi, as well as that you can be called Leena.

Sylvi Ahola: Here on this side, I have been called more often Sylvi. The official post, when that is my first name, it comes by that name. When I was a child, it was more Leena. But to be called Anna-Leena, that was seldom.
(SA 2001, p. 1–2)

The conversation continued in this alert two-way atmosphere. Similarly to the other women I interviewed, for Sylvi Ahola it was self-evident that she would discuss the terms of production from the very beginning of the interview situation. I also asked

when she was born. She quoted the year and was just about to add the date but she hesitated, and asked if it was necessary to give it. She judged that such details might not be needed. However, I interpreted her comment in the light of her not wanting the interview to include identifiable information. This was based on what she had said earlier on the phone about not wanting any names used. The date would not have to be in the final version of my thesis, I answered, but it would help me to see the whole. She was right though about her birth date, the year was enough, and even saying one's birth year was optional. I knew already from the previous interviews that the women would take control. Likewise, Sylvi Ahola was commenting on and returning questions from the beginning. When I analysed our exchange later, I wondered if I actually was as comfortable with her being in charge as I claimed. Namely, it was possible that I had tried to convince her of my researcher position by naming the date as 'important for the research'.

By the third transcript page, Sylvi had built into her narrative the theme of two places and times, as self-evidence of the mental geography of her original home place. For her, time was divided into 'on this side' which I interpreted meaning 'after the evacuation or after arriving in the present home' and 'when I was a child'. She described her home place in Karelia by referring to the current border and how, in the present tense, their place is near to it. This was almost exactly the same answer as Kyllikki Iloranta gave me, although that I asked her in the present tense about the location of her home place may have influenced this formulation. Both of them also used the pronouns 'we' and 'our' in answering. Kyllikki Iloranta said: "[f]rom our home place it is no more than, let us say, about twenty kilometres to the current border (KI 2001, p. 3)." Sylvi Ahola answered:

Sylvi Ahola: We are so close to this current border, that it is ten kilometres from our place to there. So it is not further than that. But there is no getting there.

JL: No, really, no.

Sylvi Ahola: Or well, once I have been there myself.

JL: So after the border opened, you ['sie', the Karelian dialect form of 'you'] visited once...

Sylvi Ahola: But it is already a while back. It was when it started to be possible to get there. They unveiled this statue in the cemetery, to the deceased of the village. When was it now? I can't remember when it was. I have that time written up over there. (SA 2001, pp. 3–4)

During Sylvi Ahola's one visit back in Karelia after the border opened, she went to see the house that her brother had built there between the wars, to replace the original birth home that had been burnt down when the Soviets retreated in the Continuation war. The house was still standing, with new occupants: "My brother built then in that in between when we could be at home, he built a new one, on the same place. There it stands even today, and they are living in it" (SA 2001, p. 6). Her own home with her husband had also been burnt down, as well as the temporary cottage that she had had built after at first lodging with her brother. After describing how all the houses had been burned down, she commented that it looked miserable.

This scene that she had created was brought back to my mind when I travelled to Karelia, just a fortnight after the interview with her. I saw how the former Finnish villages in Karelia can really be very empty, with virtually no houses around. In the photographs taken before the wars, the same area is densely built and populated, as people lived in close communities. I recalled that Sylvi Ahola had presented a landscape full of houses, that one by one came down and vanished. For me, it was the contrary. When I was walking around the village roads I imagined houses emerging into the empty landscape, while my second cousin kept describing how it had been before. We were operating with 'historically the same' landscape, but through different points of entry to it. She had witnessed 'her landscape' deconstructed to an absence of a presence, whereas I was trying to reconstruct a presence of a 'told landscape' through an absence.

Annette Kuhn (2000, p. 189) writes that memory is an active production of meanings, and consequently she asks how much diverse memory texts have in common. By 'text' here she is referring to memory as always already a signifying system, never a direct experience. Both Sylvi Ahola and I were engaging with giving

meaning to this particular kind of landscape – at once ancestral and ‘own’, then war’s, and now ‘theirs’ – but it could not be that the memory texts we produced had much more in common, because our work with acquiring meaning for our experiences had differing bases. However, there was a connection between her experience and my experience. This link was our encounter and her story. Her story was entirely hers, but we had both participated in the situation of telling it. Earlier in the thesis I have named this process as ‘participatory memory work’, by which I refer to a meaningful encounter between two or more individuals.⁵⁰ My three-part approach to the analysis of her telling is a further attempt to make analytical use of the meeting, as the basis of each part lies in the ongoing dialogue before, during and after she told the story. In accordance with this, a sense of condensed, layered and intense presence of both the encounter and the story had become a part of the frame through which I looked at the landscape in Karelia.

Helmi Parikka had herself phoned me in May, after hesitating for a while about whether to participate in the research or not. Coincidentally, she lived in the same general area where Sylvi Ahola did, and it suited her to be interviewed around the same time. This was crucial for managing the interview, since I was going to be away the whole summer. Furthermore, they both lived approximately near the main road between Umeå in Sweden and Lahti in Finland. This road happened to be my way between two homes at that time. I took the evening boat from Umeå, arrived late in Vaasa, the northernmost passenger line harbour between Sweden and Finland, and early in the morning started driving for the three hours that it took to reach where Helmi Parikka was living. It was totally bright, as it was summer in these two countries. I was listening to the radio and enjoying my own mother tongue. Despite the short incident with the map, noted above, I was happy to start working. Helmi Parikka was sitting in the front porch of her apartment, in the care complex for the elderly where she was living, when I arrived in the car park. It had to be her, judging by the way I saw her notice me from a distance. We had set a time, and I was not very much late, but my impression was that she had been waiting for me for a while

⁵⁰ For Haug (1999, pp. 33–72), memory-work means a group of women together writing and working on memories. Kuhn (2002, pp. 3–10) uses it as a method for individual engagement with family photographs.

already. We walked the short distance inside to her flat. Her neighbours seemed all aware of my arrival, based on the movement at the windows and by the doors, but we got in very quickly. She offered home-made diluted red berry juice in a glass jug, and without any other particular ceremonies, as with all the interviews thus far, we sat down in her living room and started to tape.

However, this time it proved to be different, after all. The tape recorder would not function. I had checked it, test-taped some speech, bought reserve batteries, and everything had been fine. Now the machine was mute. No matter how many times I pressed the button to turn on the little device on, it just did not respond. These were the two days I was going to be in Finland that summer, and I started to fear that I might lose the opportunity to interview Helmi Parikka, who had phoned a month and a half before and reported herself willing to talk about her life. I started to plan that I would sit down with her and take notes, but it was hard to see how I could manage it verbatim, remembering how variegated telling in the interviews could be. Instead, I decided to try to find a new recorder, since she knew an electrical appliance shop quite nearby. To my happy surprise, the one gadget that I needed was found in the shop, the one and only one they had.

The day was very warm, and by the time I was back, the heat of the day had caught up with Helmi Parikka and she was afraid of the warmth affecting her memory. After running around for the machine I was also very warm and sympathised with her, as well being happy to have the machinery working and so able to conduct the interview. This combination of exhaustion and joy perhaps showed in my answer, as well as my noticing that the heat affected her, when I said that the most important thing was not to 'remember'. I meant to say that talking would lead to remembering. Nonetheless, she did not accept this comment at all, but continued with the theme of remembering. Once again, the person being interviewed showed from the beginning that I could say what I wanted, but she knew what the talk was going to be about. Kathleen Mullen Sands (2000, pp. 16, 45–46) found it problematic when her interviewee answered the way she wanted and resisted her questions. She would have preferred long statements. I had been struggling partly with the same question, as I

have explained in relation to interviewing Bertta Kaukinen. However, once again, Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka proved with their own talk and command over what was said that this ‘resistance’ was a natural part of the interview:

Helmi Parikka: I don’t know about my memory now, it has been vanishing along the way.

JL: Here the main thing is not to remember.

Helmi Parikka: It took me a long while to think about this when I saw the announcement in the newspaper. I cut it out then and was thinking whether to get in touch [with you]. But it stayed in my thoughts somehow and kept coming back. It became then self-evident to participate when I phoned. I remembered so much then but I don’t think I can remember anything now.

JL: Well let’s see. (HP 2001, p. 1)

Besides being reminded that all these women intended to be interviewed on their own terms, my attention was caught by both of them giving detailed accounts of the beginning of the war and the two evacuations. All this was related to how quickly everything could alter. Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka were married to local farmers, which further emphasized the change due to war in their lives, since simultaneously when they left their homes they also lost their employment and income all together. Sylvi Ahola married in 1933, with a farmer whose house was three kilometres from where her family lived. She moved into the husband’s house. They had their first child in October 1939: “He arrived just in time before the war. So his father saw him. He was a day old when his father had to leave there, to the war. But he did not get leave the whole time. Then on Judgment Sunday (in Finnish the name for Christ the King Sunday) he came home for the last time, when the war began. He took a taxi with his nephew from Vyborg and they came. He was two hours at home when he had to go back again”, she told me (SA 2001, p. 16–17). She was evacuated with her child and seventy-seven-year mother-in-law on 22 February 1940. Her husband was killed the next day, although she did not know this at that time. When she commented on the evacuation and the death, if I understand correctly what she said,

she drew a parallel between leaving a physical home and departing from physical existence.

Sylvi Ahola: Twice we left. The first time we left it was twenty-second February, we were escaping the Winter War. My husband died on the twenty-third of February. So we left those homes simultaneously. Let me see. The first time we left it was on Thursday. But the temperature was forty degrees Celsius, or was it even colder. The boy was still small, as it was the beginning of October that he was born. But when my neighbour started to take us to the station, he said he is of the opinion that our village will not leave after all. The sky was so clear that they would bomb on the way. They would stay at home. I said that if we didn't have to, we wouldn't either leave. When the boy was so small and it was so fiercely cold. (SA 2001, p. 7–8).

The people who left on the first day when they were ordered to do so were bombed in a school where they had gathered to wait for transportation: “Many, many died, also from our village”, Sylvi Ahola concluded (SA 2001, p. 9). This school was where she too would have gone with her son. She could only praise her decision to stay for that one extra night, even when it had been similarly dangerous. After that one night, she was put with her child and mother-in-law in a cattle wagon with no direction given. It was so bare and cold that she could not change the baby, who had to lie in his own ‘warmth’. When they stopped, they were given some porridge and they were able to clean the babies, “There were a lot of children there”, she added (SA 2001, p. 10).

This story of the first two nights of the evacuation was told by Sylvi Ahola without her emphasizing any point in particular, yet she managed to deliver a very thorough image of what happened and of the particular problems that needed to be faced when escaping with a child, in the same manner as Bertta Kaukinen told about her problems with breast milk. Her way of telling was economical, yet full of detail. After their basic needs were taken care of, they were put on buses to the next destination. When I asked about what happened after that, Sylvi Ahola's answer took up three transcribed pages. After a couple of nights in different places, they were given a kitchen to live in while the owner was at the war. They were told that if he came back alive, they would have to leave. Then the message that her husband had

died finally reached her. She was going to travel to the funeral, but simultaneously she was also told that they would have to continue on their way elsewhere. She asked to stay a little longer, as her child needed a care-taker while she was at the funeral, and she had got to know the people in that place. After this they got a temporary place near by, but when the husband of that house returned he asked them to leave. In the next place, the owners received them kindly. They even asked whether she wanted to stay upstairs or downstairs. The atmosphere in the house was good. This couple visited Sylvi Ahola twice after she moved out and got a permanent place: “These people who received us were often criticized but at least we met this nice person”, and she referred to the wife, whom she found cheerful (SA 2001, p. 14). Then it was time to return to Karelia:

Sylvi Ahola: The interim peace [as the time between the wars is called⁵¹]. Or it was no interim peace. Whatever it was, we got home. I was able to buy a cow in the house where we got the milk during the two years we stayed there. With the cow we headed there, home. We started with building. There was nothing left. (...) Everything was burnt down, all the buildings. Only the stone walls of the cowshed were in their place. (SA 2001, 14–16)

Since nothing of their own home was left, they stayed first in her brother’s home and then got a temporary cottage and a sauna built. Everybody was building something new, when they had to leave again after two years:

JL: You left again in the summer?

Sylvi Ahola: We left a little before Midsummer. It was a cold Midsummer, so cold it was. It rained a lot. We left with a horse which we had bought. There were no tractors or cars then. We got to the railway station. There was loads of stuff around the station [people’s belongings waiting for transportation]. We went there every day to check if we could get into a train. But no, we were there some days. But then, at last. (SA 2001, pp. 18–19)

JL: You were able to continue by train?

⁵¹ The term ‘interim peace’ stems from Finns believing and hoping that the Moscow Peace Treaty in 1940 would be temporary (Hentilä 1999, p. 191).

Sylvi Ahola: Yes, we could take the train. We went to the direction of Valkeakoski and Sääksmäki.

JL: It was not the same direction where you had been before?

Sylvi Ahola: No, it wasn't, it was Valkeakoski. We got a big kitchen and a room. There was space, a corridor, even a separate staircase where to go in. We stayed there again for two years.

JL: Everything went fine? People were friendly and so on?

Sylvi Ahola: Friendly. They were Häme people but they were nice. Then I also helped them when they needed something.

JL: After the two years, what then?

Sylvi Ahola: It was always two years.

JL: So it seems. (SA 2001, pp. 18–21)

Helmi Parikka's husband was her childhood and school companion who lived only a kilometre away. In Midsummer 1939, they decided to get married in the autumn. Right after this, he had to leave for the army, because of what was called the 'extra rehearsal', a cover name for the general mobilization. The preparations for a possible war had not gone unnoticed. They lived near the state border and witnessed the armament taking place over most of the summer and the beginning of autumn. Consequently, Helmi Parikka reserved a few words for their marriage and then proceeded straight to describing the beginning of the war, mirroring the rapid pace of changes in autumn 1939. "We got married. Then the war started", she said (HP 2001, p. 4). This describes precisely what happened and portrays a war story told by a woman as efficiently as this can be done. In her story, a group of women are taking care of the house while the men are away in the army for an extra rehearsal, and I have referred to some aspects of it earlier. At some time during the morning round of milking the cows, a war has begun. When Helmi Parikka's younger sister went to the cowshed, everything was the way it had been the day before; when she stepped out, the border between Finland and the Soviet Union had turned flaming red. The reality of having to leave had to be faced in a few days. Besides some personal belongings, only the cows could be taken; all the rest of the animals stayed behind in the

cowshed. They were told that the army would take some, but they could not know for sure. Helmi Parikka's tone was such that she was still bothered by having to leave the animals and them possibly suffering; she was not sure if they were ever rescued. When she left, she did not know her destination, and getting settled with a permanent address took another seven and a half years. From December 1939 until 1941, Helmi Parikka stayed where she was evacuated, and then she went back to Karelia in 1941. In June 1944, she was evacuated again. In her next address she stayed for three and a half years, after which she found a place for a home and started building a house on the plot of land that she had bought.

Because there was so little time between her marriage and the start of the war, I asked her if she had moved to her husband's place or if she was still staying at her parental home. She was in her old home together with her mother and two sisters, but it was a bit unclear if this was because of the war changing the plans of the young couple, or whether he had planned to move into her home anyway, which would not have been unusual in Karelia (Armstrong 2004, p. 58). In any case, it was apparent that the daughters were used to keeping the house. In the context of thinking about what to do for living, she told of how in many houses there were no sons, and the daughters had learnt to do all the men's work. It appeared though that she had a brother, and from a later statement, that her father was alive too, but not her mother. Her father being mentioned implied that the house was yet undivided, and thus also that it was big in size. This circumstance of women being in charge came out in all kinds of situations. For example, when her husband came home for a surprise holiday in-between the wars, after his family had moved back to the farm in Karelia, this 'women's majority', as she called it, made the decision not to let him return to the army when he was due, since they thought it was too soon: "Jorma (the husband) got a three day holiday, to come home. And he came, it was such a surprise. We were planting the potatoes, in the spring then (1944) when a taxi drove to the yard. We all sprang there, but then in the evening they phoned to the school nearby that he had to come back right away. But this women's majority decided then that you [he] will not leave. We will bake food for you to take with you. The war will not be short of one man. He was then one night at home" (HP 2001, p. 32). This visit was his last at

home. He died the day that Vyborg was conquered, on 20 June 1944. Only his older son remembered his father later, and missed him tremendously. The younger one, born in 1943 back in Karelia, saw his father a couple of times but was too young to remember it.

Helmi Parikka with her two children was evacuated in June. Already on 9 June the bombing was so fierce in the border villages that some people had left before the evacuation order was given the next day, and the rest of the Karelian Isthmus people were evacuated by the eighteenth. Most farmers had a horse and it turned out that the trains from Eastern Karelia were not a strategic target for the Soviets and so the evacuees could travel by train from the eastern border (Hietanen 2005, p. 825), with one exception as was established earlier, when a phone call with a woman who had witnessed the Elisenvaara railway station bombing was introduced. Mostly civilians, 134 people died in an air raid that took fifteen minutes. Among the people that were caught in the bombing was Helmi Parikka with her sons: “On the journey back, when we were being evacuated, they were bombing a lot. Our train, the one in which we were, could leave, other trains still stayed behind. We got to this forest part, and the alarm came. All the people were got out of the train, hiding behind the piles of wood [for the engines]. A lot of people died (JL mumbles) and they said it was the station manager who had denounced [us]. He disappeared” (Parikka 2001, p. 18).

This story of her second evacuation journey was one she told criss-crossed with an earlier event, with the effect of the future being projected onto the present, added to by the perspective of the moment of telling. While she was talking about her return to Karelia for reconstruction work, she mentioned the train stopping in Elisenvaara. In the next moment, she said that this was the place through which they travelled while being evacuated. Both times were marked with excitement, but of different kind. After the war restarted, people started to return but before all the areas had been won back. Helmi Parikka’s home was one of those areas, and even the soldiers were wondering how the women had been allowed to return in such uncertainty: “The further we got, even the soldiers were wondering if Finland’s military masters were crazy, allowing the lottas in such a place that had not been re-occupied. It started to

appear even a little exciting for oneself, too” (HP 2001, pp. 17–18). For a brief moment, Elisenvaara was shown as the crossroads of an exciting yet hopeful return and also a place of horror concerning the second evacuation. By the time I had understood that she had changed from talking about her return to Karelia to the later evacuation journey, she was already back in the story that she had started to tell, and how they stayed in Elisenvaara for days waiting for the railway to be fixed. She brought these three times together, told what happened, and continued. I tried to say that I was aware of the bombing, but only managed to mutter something – in the transcript this is described in-between her talk as ‘(JL mumbles)’. She did not return to this event again even when she was telling about the second evacuation. The only detail she mentioned about that journey was how she had refused to start writing a letter, because she felt bad: “I won’t write anything because I feel somehow bad, I cannot write. I was moved to Korpilahti, to a school there, we were quite a flock of people. Then the letters started to come back, and well, it came, through the army post, the information came, he had fallen on the twentieth” (HP 2001, p. 33).

On the Karelian Isthmus, all the evacuation plans fell apart when the Soviet Union started its massive attack at the beginning of June 1944. Most people had left even before the order to evacuate came. The traffic was totally chaotic and all the roads were full of people. Many families had acquired a horse, which made it possible to manage despite the masses on the move. However, most of the belongings that had been gathered during the ‘interim peace’ were lost (Hietanen 2005, pp. 823–825). During those days of the fierce Red Army attack, Bertta Kaukinen, Kyllikki Iloranta, Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka were all out on the roads trying to guess their destination. The first woman I interviewed, Bertta Kaukinen, was escaping with her week-old baby daughter, and Kyllikki Iloranta, the second, with her year-old daughter and her mother. Kyllikki Iloranta’s mother had found it very difficult to pull herself away from the land that would have provided a future means of living; she kept weeding flax when the roads in the distance were already flooded with refugees. Helmi Parikka became a war widow on 20 June, 1944, the day that even she referred to as the day when Vyborg was lost. All of the women in question needed to start

thinking of earning the living for the family. They came out of the war as having lost their husbands and their homes and livelihoods.

War was an intense physical presence in the stories of Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka. They started with calculating the risks of staying or escaping, fear and bombings on the roads, looking for shelter, problems with transportation, all combined with the worry of getting the children and the cattle somewhere safe. The daily events at the front blended with describing where the husbands were stationed and how they died. When Sylvi Ahola returned to Karelia, she found her home place being turned into a defence post by the Soviets, with rifle shells piled next to the door and some left military paraphernalia in the forest. Helmi Parikka travelled back home before the area had been declared safe. She was not allowed to cycle to her home place, and was finally offered a rifle for protection. But after three days of travelling back to Karelia she was not in the mood for being told no. She refused the rifle and cycled back home, to find it full of books and bedbugs. Also the two previous women I interviewed, as well as the pilot interviewees, had all told stories that I thought could be called war stories, if such a name is not reserved for descriptions of battles. This was at first surprising, since I had planned to focus on 'postwar'. Alessandro Portelli (1997, pp. 7–8) writes how hospital stories are for women what war stories are for men, but stories of hospitals and health are largely unrecognized as a genre, perhaps because of nurturing being about continuing action and not 'an event' in the way as a war is. This he reads as a gender-determined definition of what is counted as history and what is not. A further question arises stemming from his discussion: What happens when women are not telling hospital stories but war stories? None of the war widows I interviewed had any hospital stories to share – except for Bertta Kaukinen, who said briefly that she had been taken to a hospital after being wounded in an explosion on a military compound at the beginning of the Continuation War. If men's war stories make history, does this not mean that women's war stories inevitably make history, too, even if hospital stories might not? It would have to, if war stories are regarded as a genre that places people in history, rather than a gender genre.

A question remains, then: are women's war stories to be regarded as war stories? Portelli reserves war stories for men, although earlier he had cited an old woman saying that everybody was involved in WW2 because of the war not being 'out there' any longer. Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka did indeed have quite a bit of experience of what 'really' makes war, if bombs, blood and death are counted as central to this. However, it is not often that a war widow has been asked to tell her war story. Neither did I do this; I went to them to ask about 'postwar'. Even in the critical literature on war and women, it is repeated that war literature and poetry by definition privileges actual battlefield experience (Higonnet et al 1987, p. 14). Although it has been noted that there are women who have been at home but still reinvent the vocabulary of war, as well as women who have been on the front and can bring new insight into war (Higonnet 1993, p. 207–208), the old division between the home and the front still prevails. Challenging the traditional narratives of war's two sides, the men protect through fighting and the women being protected away from the front, does not often occur (Meyer 2002, p. 166). This divide, however, was not recognized by Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka, along with the other women I interviewed or who telephoned me, who all started by plunging into their own experience of what it means to be bombed and to escape, fearing for one's own life and especially for the lives of children and other that one is responsible for, relatives, the elderly, the cattle.

However, I realized that I might have been barking up the wrong tree. None of the women I interviewed actually started by saying that they would describe their war experiences. War emerged in the stories as the reason for what was happening and what had to be done, and not as the cause for telling. Consequently, Portelli's statement about the division between war as an event, and nursing in hospital as an ongoing activity leading to historical visibility of the former, started to make more sense but in a different way. The stories of wartime by the women that I had been listening to never restricted themselves to just the occasion and its effects, but embraced a wide-angle on a process that covered issues such as economical, emotional and social managing, to name just a few. The many-layered technique of telling was concerned with ongoing activity within all areas of life. Joan Scott (1987,

p. 25) asks how women's history can be used to reconceptualize war and rewrite history. When Sylvi Ahola's and Helmi Parikka's war stories are referred to in answering the question, one part of the answer is to point out that the old stereotype of women not telling war stories can and should be buried. Reconceptualizing begins with the meaning of a war story: it belongs surely to all those who live through a war. Furthermore, their stories involve both the everyday and the battle. This broadens the meaning of a war story, and through this it can become the rewriting of history. Elsa Morante's *La Storia* (1988; *History: A Novel*) [1974] is often referred to when an alternative view is sought to describing war. Ida Mancuso, the main character of the novel, does not read newspapers and she is little interested in the society around her, but the mechanisms of war influence everything in her life. Similarly for Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka, war is a direct impinging presence and thus it has to be understood. However, them being informed about the events at the front was essential for their everyday survival; they can still quote a day's events both at home and at the front – or what they were told about what happened – sixty years after wartime. Helmi Parikka with her sisters smuggled a big wooden radio onto the evacuation train even when people were allowed to take only what they could carry, food and some clothes. The sisters lied that the parcels were just food for the three of them. They went hungry rather than left the radio; news was the most important thing.

Women's Land

The average size of farms in the ceded area was small compared with the rest of the country (five to ten hectares). This was due to historic reasons concerning property ownership, one of these being the structure of big families sharing a house breaking down into smaller units (Hietanen 1982, pp. 67–86). However, Sylvi Ahola was cultivating fifty-five hectares with her husband, which is regarded as above the average in Finland. In the Ladoga Karelia, where Helmi Parikka with her mother, two sisters and at least one brother had a farm that was seventy hectares, the farms were bigger to start with. After the evacuation, they worked in different jobs, and eventually acquired new farms which were much smaller compared with what they

had before. Sylvi Ahola bought six hectares of land, both field and forest. Helmi Parikka's plot was mostly forest, with two wild meadows half a hectare in size each, and otherwise the fields had to be cleared out of the forest.

The period of transition for both Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka lasted for quite some time after the war. The stories of this time not only consisted of changing places, but also concerned the social webs, of those close people who had been scattered around the country in different homes waiting for a permanent relocation. To start with, the situation within the family changed according to the living arrangements. Sylvi Ahola's brother-in-law moved to a small city in Southern Finland and took her mother-in-law with him. She had been staying with Sylvi, who had some cows and the small child to look after, and it was thought that she could have it a bit easier without so many in the family to take care of. Sylvi was also offered a small cottage near her extended family in the new place. One part of the settlement program was to try to relocate people coming from the same areas near to each other, although in practice the old very tight village communities were scattered (Raninen-Siiskonen 1999, p. 15).

Sylvi Ahonen decided not to move to the cottage designated for her. She reasoned that the house would be too cold in the winter and would need heating even at night, and it had only a small size range and no baking oven. After Sylvi had visited this place, her mother-in-law came to see her off and said that she would gladly join her, when Sylvi finally got a place: "I said that is so You will, that is for sure, when I just find a place where I can be" (SA 2001, p. 19). Their next dwelling was in a new place, where some of her parental relatives were already staying. In her forward-telling technique way of speaking, she added that the parents of Helena were also there. Helena would be the future wife of her son, I learnt when I asked. Sylvi Ahola lived in this place for two years, and worked in the local school kitchen. Eventually, she found a place in the same area that she wanted to live in. The long transition period was over. She started to build a house with the logs from her own forest. Her mother-in-law moved in and the family unit of two generations of women and a young boy resumed living together.

Sylvi Ahola: (...) After two years [in the area cooking and cleaning in a school] we started to build this and I bought these fields as a voluntary purchase. The fields were about four or five kilometres in the direction there [pointed out the window], but on the side of the road. And the plot of forest, and a field, they were about two kilometres away. But around here still. I thought that everything was near here. There was a shop. Over there near the forest there is a railroad. There was also the old road to the nearby bigger cities. Also the buses were running past this place, many a day. But now there is only one bus. A car is a must. There was a station nearby. It had a post office, and all. Now there is nothing left. People have died too. The houses are empty except for the summer. (SA 2001, pp. 24–25)

The first impression that Sylvi Ahola gave of her life in this village was very idyllic. She described how her relatives came willingly to help when it was time to thresh and make hay. There could be up to ten extra people in the house at those times. She milked the cows in the fields and took two 20 litre milk cans by bicycle to be sent to the dairy. However, she hesitated answering the question about how people in the area generally received them, after her very good experiences during the first and second evacuation. She was not sure if she could tell publicly what she had to say even now. I asked her to consider if she could speak, although simultaneously I was uncertain if I was pushing her to say something that she really did not want to utter. When she decided to talk, the problem which led her to first hold back turned out to be that a neighbour was involved in the story:

JL: During the first and second evacuation people were very friendly around where you were. How was this area after You settled here, were there reactions?

Sylvi Ahola: No, or, not against us, or well there were, but we cannot put it there [glance at the note pad and the tape recorder].

JL: Here you can say. Now it is the time to say. This is a kind of a thing that here your name does not have to be mentioned. It is just important to say such things that people might not otherwise know about. That it has been like this before.

Sylvi Ahola: Well, we had a deal agreed on the fields and how I will pay for them. Then suddenly I learnt that there is a local person who was going to get this land. We would be moved to one and a half

kilometre away, further away. The seller said that he would rather sell to somebody permanently here. We had to take the papers to Helsinki. An engineer who came here was very angry. He said that such a thing cannot be done. You are the first on the list to have land and you have bid for it.

JL: They had tried to play You out, even when You had already an agreement.

Sylvi Ahola: Yes. They wanted it otherwise. But they could not, this engineer said. So we got that place. I can't say if it was the Helsinki visit [that helped]. We are happy with the six hectares that we got. In that other place, we would have had to move just near to the side of the forest. We have now been living here. All sorts. But we are on good terms with the son [of the seller]. We haven't ever talked about these things. (SA 2001, pp. 27–30)

Suddenly I was quite sure this was the person who had phoned me to say that his neighbour could be a good interviewee when he had seen the call to participate in the Karelia-newspaper. Maybe this was a romantic interpretation, but it still felt possible that the caller was the son of the farmer who had tried to betray Sylvi Ahola's trust. One of these 'paying the debt' situations was also described by Sylvi Ahola herself. Her landlady of two years had put extra boards on the thresholds when Helmi had been living in her house with her son. This was despite Sylvi using her own carpets on the thresholds and in the common entry hall. The landlady had wanted to protect the thresholds from wearing down. Sylvi Ahola was a nice person who saw the situation from her landlady's point of view. She explained that the landlady was a widow who had lost one of her two sons in the war, and the other one was living further away. She was characterized as an elderly person who was taught to be strict. While staying in her house, Sylvi Ahola hesitated to even make a fire to prepare coffee for her visitors, because she felt that the landlady would not approve. If she ventured into the kitchen, she used the smallest sticks to burn that she could find.

When Sylvi moved to her own place, the landlady became a new person: "I suppose she started to think that we would stay here for ever" (SA 2001, p. 149). One autumn day this former landlady came for a visit, with a big wicker basket full of gooseberries, "even the stalks and tops were cut, so they were all clean. She carried the basket for the four kilometres. I said that, oh dear, I would have come to carry it,

even in the bus, when the buses had started to operate to our place. She visited several years in a row. After she could not manage anymore, her son sold the place. A son to my cousin bought it, and they have been living there. The thresholds are left there. But there I saw how tight with money a person can be. It was still good that we never said anything to her” (SA 2001, pp. 150–151).

Once the issue of her coming from elsewhere and its consequences was raised, some more details were added to this, although she still always saw things in a positive light. I asked about how it had been at work for her, remembering that Kyllikki Iloranta had been called names due to being Karelian. She answered by referring straight away to her employers. The teacher couple running the school came from Karelia. They became friends and visited each other even after the teachers had moved out of the village. While talking about her friendship with the teacher couple, she added that “here there were such people that did not like...” (SA 2001, p. 31). She did not specify if this ‘dislike’ was directed towards the teachers or her, or possibly all of them together as responsible for the centre unit of the village, the school. She also added that that there were many children of the evacuated Karelians in school. Later her son told his version of being in school, but I will return to his story in the concluding discussion of the Sylvi Ahola interview. The Karelians were generally friendly with each other, even if they were strangers. Sylvi Ahola told about Karelian hobos who learnt to know her house as Karelian, and popped in for a cup of coffee. Differently from Bertta Kaukinen and Kyllikki Iloranta, Sylvi Ahonen did not even think of working on her dialect. She was immediately recognized of Karelian origin when a visitor came:

JL: Some people have said now afterwards that when they came from Karelia, they had to modify their own talk. They had to hide a little being Karelian. How was it for You, did You have to?

Sylvi Ahola: I think we have been like we are. When the Karelian hobos came in, they only had to hear a word and they asked: ‘Where in Karelia are you from?’ (SA 2001, p. 40)

Later in the course of the interview, Sylvi Ahola sharpened the focus on some incidents when her newcomer position had caused problems. Once she employed a

man on her farm sawing logs into boards. She found his demand that the panels should be brushed totally clean odd and such an order took a good morning's work away from her own chores. After telling me this, she said with a ringing laughter: "Maybe it was hate for us Karelians" (Ahola 2001, p. 107). Helmi Parikka's first contact with people's prejudices against the Karelians was during the first evacuation. She was totally surprised by the attitudes she encountered.

Helmi Parikka: (...) They came to look at us. My god, the whole big room was full of them, and they were circulating around us. 'You are just like others are.' I asked what they meant. 'Well when you even understand our talk.' They had this idea that the Karelians are Russians, through and through. Dear lord, I said, Finland is supposed to be so small, but so very little are its places known. (Parikka 2001, p. 13)

Later in her interview, Helmi Parikka did not talk much about the relationship between the locals and the newcomers. She told about how she had participated with her sons a couple of times in the activities of the Organization of the Relatives of the Deceased, but then it stopped functioning, and she had heard people saying that there were too many Karelian participants. When I asked her if she had herself experienced any trouble, she first of all said that she was the type of person who would keep herself to herself. And when she went on to describe participating in several organizations, it sounded that for her own part she did not know about any particular cases of discrimination. She was an active person who participated in many organizations, and she focused more on the differences between those who lived in the town and thought highly of themselves and the nice normal people who lived around the lake, country people as she was herself.

The negative things that Sylvi Ahola experienced in her new home environment were much less significant in her description than the sheer joy of finding a permanent place to live. Along with this came a sense of being accepted and integrating into the surrounding society:

Sylvi Ahola: If we are not pushed away by force, we will stay here, since we have built this [house]. We were with these locals here. Here a station manager lived, and over there the Lundberg granny, she was by

herself. She was old. We asked them to come to the sauna, and they did. The old Lundberg granny came also on the threshing days and cooked. I think we got along fine. In the autumn if one went to the potato field and started digging, soon there were more people. We got along fine. We gave milk. They were waiting to get milk. At that time you could do it, but I guess now it is forbidden to give milk directly from home. (SA 2001, pp. 39–40)

I tried to ask her if there was a difference between her having had a big house before, and then turning into a settler and a small farmer. She connected the question first to her newcomer position, and then to finally finding a home, instead of it being a matter of a position as such. For her, having a place of one's own was what mattered, and if it was small, it was still better than living in other people's homes. Being a farmer and having a house also meant permanent neighbours that she soon became friends with, as she had commented earlier in the interview, and a sense of community was stressed in her description of settling in the area:

JL: How about when you said that your birth home was a bigger kind, and your own home with your husband as well. Did it ever feel that your own position there in Karelia, when you were a farmer's wife, you had a house and such, was there a difference between coming here? I mean in your own feelings about the position?

Sylvi Ahola: Well there was. First I think many people here looked at us as strangers for a long time, when we came here. But I don't know, I don't think they did anymore later on, when we had established ourselves here. Now, when we have been here and where I have had to live with the people here, they have always been friendly.

JL: But how about for example owning a house. How much land did you have in Karelia? Here you had six, wasn't it so?

Sylvi Ahola: Yes, here we had six. But some years back my son bought eight more. Now it is around thirty... At home we had fifty-five hectares.

JL: So it was quite a big house. Did it feel that you started anew as a small house matron? Was it a feeling like that or was it just that this was home?

Sylvi Ahola: I was so pleased when we got here. You would not believe how it is to be in somebody else's house, and how much it differs from having a place of one's own.

JL: Hmmm. Of course.

Sylvi Ahola: It is such a big difference. But it was good still... [in the places she had before]

JL: You never at any stage missed after having a big house or such. When you got here, this was your own house, and that was important. Not the rest of it.

Sylvi Ahola: Nothing else mattered except that this was now our own [home]. It was something one knew how to enjoy. But when you are in a strange house there are strangers. I had this little boy, he didn't understand everything. We had other people like us around. A shop manager nearby had a child that was a bit younger than Elias. He has still stayed in touch, even though they left the place long ago. He lives on the coast now. He came to see us from there. He took photographs and I thought it was nice. Even his grandson phoned Elias a couple of years ago and asked if he could come and visit, when you always were so kind to my father, too [tears in her eyes]. Like this, the old neighbours. (...)

JL: Was this choice of place then clear after you had settled here, or did You ever think of leaving and looking around?

Sylvi Ahola: No, I did not. We had to move so many times and to so many places that I would not even have managed to think such things. I was just happy to get to one place and to be able to be there. (SA 2001, pp. 70–74)

For Helmi Parikka, it was not self-evident that she would start a new farm. She had initially decided that, since she had to leave Karelia and the farm there twice, she would not go back to farming. War widows were offered professional courses in a number of different skills so that they could support their families, a dressmaking course being the most usual (Salonen 1995, p. 30), which was the one that Helmi Parikka took. However, her health did not tolerate a job where she had to sit a lot, and she returned to being a farmer. After moving to her new farm, she heard from her young helper that the men in the village had been wondering about a single woman with two children and a mother starting a cold farm. Nonetheless, living in a remote corner of the village was also helpful, as she did not have to deal with the officials when it came to her children.

Helmi Parikka: There were only two and a half hectares wild meadows, otherwise it was forest. It was quite something. (...) Our helper, Matti, said to me once, when he was digging a ditch in the unprepared soil, how the men in the village had been considering us. They had wondered how a single woman could come to a cold farm. I asked him to tell me what they had said. It was 'Is that woman in her right mind, to start with two small young children and an old mother'. Well, I was a bit of a weirdo, I guess. Only later I realized that I got off to a good start there away from the village. Nobody came to me to say anything. There was this one war widow in the village, she had three daughters and sixty hectares of land. I travelled with her around Europe many times and she said after we had retired that she was always being called into the custody board. I was just there, in the middle of the forest. (HP 2001, pp. 43–44)

Starting a farm as a single woman entailed a lot of work, but it was not anything new as a workload, nor as a type of work. Neither of the two women expressed any fear or hesitation about their decision concerning the work. They knew from their lives before that farming was arduous work. Sylvi Ahola stressed that she had always worked in farming and knew what to do, when I asked her if she had to learn new skills about the work that her husband would have done. If she needed extra help, she hired men to do this work, or she called people in to do voluntary work together. At that time, country people helped each other without even being asked, as in the example above of people coming to help voluntarily with the potatoes in the autumn after seeing a person working in the field alone. Sylvi had her mother-in-law with her, who helped her out in the kitchen and with the children. Helmi was living with her mother, who did the cooking and minded the child, while she worked with the cattle and in the fields. Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka were both skilled and appreciated in farming. For example, Sylvi Ahola received prizes for milk production, and both participated in the community's social gatherings, such as the club for the Karelians, as well as for war widows. Helmi Parikka was particularly active socially, and later she was also a member of the organization for female war veterans and for the visually handicapped, besides her active role in organizing and participating in different trips.

Even though Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka did not complain about the amount of work they had to do, its plentifulness was obvious. However, no matter how much

effort it took and whatever happened, it was nothing compared with the experience of losing a home: “It could be that at times something unpleasant happened, or things did not go right, but it had to be all... A person had seen so much, I say, like leaving home” (HP 2001, p. 77). In analytical vocabulary, the word ‘strong’ would be used in the context of women managing everything that they had to do. I referred earlier in the thesis to the ‘strong Finnish woman’ tradition (Markkola 1997; Apo 1993, p. 142). In Sylvi Ahola’s own vocabulary, the word strong was replaced by ‘healthy’ – being in a good physical condition was meaningful in everyday life. She remembered being sick once, during the time when she returned to Karelia: “I had jaundice. I did not even have to ask what it was, when it was visible, my colour changed that much” (SA 2001, p. 91). Her illness did not prevent her from working, though: “Even then I had to do the daily chores” (SA 2001, pp. 91–92). For her the idea of ‘being strong’ was recognizable in the sense of having the strength to finish a day’s work. When I asked if she identified herself as a strong woman or how she would to describe herself now, after the years of hard work and managing: “Yes, one had to be. It was good that I was healthy” (...) (SA 2001, p. 91). Later she also said, and in her interview Helmi Parikka used nearly the same words, that:

Sylvi Ahola: Now I would not be able to do it anymore. But then one was in such a situation that one managed. Doing all that was also a bit of a must, and there was also the desire for doing. Work just got done. (SA 2001, 128)

Helmi Parikka: Working is nice when you like it. It is not unpleasant. (HP 2001, p. 76)

Sometimes the workload was used as a way of numbing other feelings. When there was a lot of work, the mind was at ease. Sylvi Ahola referred to this on several occasions during the interview. For example, when I asked her if she used the word ‘survival stories’, or how would she describe her life in her own chosen vocabulary, she did not express this in terms of surviving but instead as being quite at a loss. Yet even then continuing to work helped:

JL: I was first thinking of gathering survival stories. Would You use that word, or was it more about life just getting a new direction and

then continuing and working from that point on. How would you yourself describe the course of your life?

Sylvi Ahola: Well I don't know. Many times one had to look up and think how to go on. It was not...

JL: In what kinds of situations? In what kinds of situations did you get such a feeling that...

Sylvi Ahola: This happened when there was an urgency somewhere and something had to be done. Then I found work good. When there was work, it took the thoughts away, it kept them somewhere else. (SA 2001, pp. 58–59)

Mourning had to be still done, and it took time. Helmi Parikka answered simply “of course” when I asked if she ever thought how it would have been if her husband had been alive (HP 2001, p. 53). For Sylvi Ahola, some upsetting details kept piercing through everyday activities; she thought about her deceased husband dying when it was very cold, and how he had to lie out in the cold. She could not avoid either thinking about how very close to surviving her husband had been, when he died on 23 February 1940 and peace was declared on 3 March 1940. Many died, but her husband could have made it. Possible references to dying for one's country she dismissed:

JL: How did You feel about your husband dying? Was it something that you just had to accept, or were You possibly bitter about him falling. Or did You think that he died for a big cause?

Sylvi Ahola: Well I guess something like came to my mind. When such a long time passed [until he died]. He fell on the twenty-third of February. It would have been only until the thirteenth [March]. He could have survived even that time. But it could not be helped, so many died on the same day. The son of our neighbour, too, in that Summa destruction [one of the earlier main battles of the Winter War].

JL: Your husband was taken back?

Sylvi Ahola: Yes, they took him back. He died around four. When the darkness came, they took him back. That was the end of it. It was a machine gun shower. Even his wallet was torn into two halves from the middle, also the notes were in two halves. Total finish. It was better that way. – Please, eat. (SA 2001, pp. 112–113)

Talking with people who have experienced war differs from one's everyday conversation quite profoundly. Sylvi Ahola could talk about the past, but her main orientation was always towards taking care of the present situation. After she told me how her husband was totally cut into pieces in the machine-gun fire, when as a guest she invited me to take some more to eat from the coffee table. Then we continued.

Income was meagre on the new farms, but basic needs were taken care of: "We got along when we had land. But it was tight. There was the pension, which was good [for war widows]. (...) Everybody had it tight. Food was not plentiful. But not once was there a time when there was no food. When there was land, we got by. I have heard many people say that they had to go to bed, not having had enough [food]" (SA 2001, p. 42–43). The war pension was mentioned as a part of the income, but it was clear that Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka did not manage running their farms with this pension money. Helmi Parikka told me that a while back she had gone through some old papers and come across her war widow pension receipts. She had tried to convert the sums into today's money, and wondered how much it would be. I also asked her if she had been envied for her pension, which was a question that had come up in the pilot interviews and also in academic literature. Instead of answering this question, she brought up the issue of some women reacting negatively to the war widows because they thought that they would steal their husbands. A friend of hers had tried to join a trip for war veterans, but the wives of the veterans had become angry for her coming along alone. Similar incidents were mentioned in all the interviews.

Sylvi Ahola's and Helmi Parikka's sons learnt from early on to participate in work, just as their mothers had as children. They learnt from their mothers, but also from neighbours and relatives: "If a man came to the house, my son was always listening very carefully to what he said. But anybody at home would try to give advice at least to the point they can. (...) My cousin and brother visited often, and they talked a lot with him and guided him. Our neighbouring farmer always showed him how he did it when he started plumbing and ploughing" (SA 2001, pp. 65 – 66). "Of course it would have been best to live and be together, but in wartime one missed out on so

much, so much”, she concluded (SA 2001, p. 67). Helmi Parikka told me about people commenting on how she dared to let her boys do things, but according to a Finnish proverb, which she used, work educates the working (learning by doing). Her sons often hurt their legs, which taught them to be more careful. Both the farms were taken over by the sons, which was also the original purpose. Sylvi Ahola stayed on the farm and Helmi Parikka after a while moved to a self-contained care home:

Sylvi Ahola: I tried to keep up the house until my son was big. He could then do what he wanted with it. It is like his father’s home place. This was in my mind all the time. (...)

JL: You had in mind that this place was patrimony?

Sylvi Ahola: That the patrimony would continue. We had at home there [in Karelia] such a lovely place. It was on a south slope, with a lot of apple trees. A river was running by the sauna. It was easy to go swimming. The little ones had to be supervised all the time. (...) (SA 2001, pp. 49–50)

Helmi Parikka’s sons urged their mother to start travelling, after her long working life. “Go and enjoy life, tour around the world!”, they encouraged their mother (HP 2001, p. 46). She took their advice: “I came back from one trip around eleven o’clock pm, took a sauna, and had the luggage ready packed for departing on an another trip at four in the morning. That was the nicest journey” (HP 2001, p. 76). The map she showed was tightly marked with straight lines for trips by plane, curvy lines for bus routes, down as far as Gibraltar. She could travel up to three times a summer to Karelia as a travel leader, mostly “in our original village” there. Nothing was left, though. In Ladoga Karelia, all the villages around the lake were emptied of houses. Her neighbour’s house was still standing as a “leftover”, she stated (HP 2001, p. 70), so “we picked flowers” (HP 2001, p. 71).

The women’s homes in Karelia were talked about as ‘the home’, mostly also in the present tense as it had been with Bertta Kaukinen and Kyllikki Iloranta. Sylvi Ahola paid attention to this herself. I had asked her about whether she felt herself to be Karelian or local. Despite the unnecessary dichotomy of the question, she did not herself make a strong division, although she answered ‘Karelian’ and connected it

with 'home'. First came the practical side, 'being here', establishing herself definitely in the place where she was. Second was her being Karelian and the processes of memory that could carry her backwards to a time then. Thinking of 'home there and then' was an exercise in time transfer which occurred in the middle of the everyday here and now. She described in caressing detail her former home, the number of windows and the size of the baking oven. Of all the women I interviewed, she was the one who had already established a home before the wars. Home as her memory arena was a combination of childhood, youth and adulthood scenes:

Sylvi Ahola: Karelian. Yes, Karelian [laughs]. I am Karelian. I am here, but always one manages to say that home, at home we were. Even when we have been here, for over fifty years already in this place. Yet always it comes to one's mind.

JL: How is it in your mind?

Sylvi Ahola: I don't know.

JL: What sorts of things come to your mind? (...) Karelia and home, is it the place or the people, or what is it that brings it back to your mind?

Sylvi Ahola: At least many times when I am alone it comes more into my mind. When one is alone, then everything comes back.

JL: What is this all?

Sylvi Ahola: Like how it was there, things like that.

JL: Do you recall the rooms?

Sylvi Ahola: We had a big house, a big main room there. My birth place was the same, also big, and they were all made of logs. A really big main room, and a big baking oven, much bigger than this [points at her baking oven]. There were the ranges too. The main room had five windows, in both those houses. They were so big that there were three more rooms in each. There was plenty of space. My birth home was built later than the one where I was married. (...) (SA 2001, 67–69).

Neither Sylvi Ahola nor Helmi Parikka married again: "We were together, ever since we were children. I always remember how we were young together. Only the last year did we decide to get married [they married in autumn 1939]. I even told my primary school teacher that my future husband would have to be a non-drinker and

non-smoker. Yes she said but where can you find one. I said that if I cannot find such a person, I will stay alone. That decision held. Still does” (HP 2001, p. 54). Helmi’s husband did not drink or smoke. For her children, a new father was an option. “My older son, he came many times crying home, a boy had been teasing him. He said that Mum, let’s just take Jussi Talvela as my father. ‘Don’t be silly, Jussi Talvela has a family, children too’, I tried to say. He said that this other boy had said [raised her voice]: ‘What about you, you evacuated boy, when you don’t even have a father?’ He did, my older son, have difficulties” (HP 2001, p. 52). Later on these boys became friends, when the teaser got a car and took Erkki [Helmi’ son] to the vocational school that they both attended. Settling in the 420,000 evacuees had taken another step, when the second generation children became friends with the local youth, and a place for them in the community was starting to be found:

JL: Is there something that You would like to tell yourself, something that I might not have understood enough to ask. A memory of how life has been? Of joys or of sorrows?

Sylvi Ahola: Big joys, I don’t know. But I remember that I was pleased when we moved here. Indeed I was pleased. (SA 2001, pp. 148–149)

For Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka, getting a permanent home ended a period of uncertainty in their lives, of having to move around and lodge in other people’s homes. Some problems still persisted, often caused by being known as an evacuee and a lone woman, but little by little there were fewer confrontations as they found their place in the community and the community made space for them. After the day’s chores, they both still found time for participating actively in the meetings of the local associations for both war widows and Karelians. For Helmi Parikka, retiring meant her accelerated participation in public activities. Both were skilled at handiwork, as well as avid readers. Sylvi Ahola returned to the issue of establishing oneself in the end of the interview, when she was answering a question on how she thought her life had found its shape after the major changes that occurred. “It was always in my mind, to have a piece of land, when it was given to those who had it before”, she confirmed as her strategy (SA 2001, p. 153).

Kindness and Humour

Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka both talked about their lives as settlers and small farmers in a down-to-earth manner. There was a lot of work, at times it weighed one down, but it was meaningful work for the future. Regarding those times when there was trouble, which was mostly related to them coming from Karelia or being lone women, they had developed personal survival strategies. First of all, they were both nice and generous people. Sylvi Ahola appeared a particularly benevolent person, which allowed her to take a grand attitude: it was not an option for her to see things only from her own point of view. However, she would not accept just any kind of behaviour, either. When she was about to lose the farm that she had already agreed to buy, she acted and won the case. This story of ‘rightful justice’ – she stressed that she was entitled to the piece of land, as was the case too for other Karelians who had lost their farms – had become a part of the family history, and her son also referred to this case when he came in and offered to make coffee. After Sylvi Ahola had lost her husband, home and the community around her, she had kept moving around, working for different people and renting rooms. Under the circumstances, she must have experienced it as particularly painful that her dream of a piece of land to her liking was about to vanish after waiting for such a long time. This would have meant continuing in uncertainty, which for her was related to not having a place of one’s own. Yet to tell about such a threat was not self-evident for her, since she felt she did not want to harm anybody through what she said. Her telling about this was encouraged by me, but I do not think that she would have come forward with the story unless she had wanted to do so. For her, this telling was based on a deeply felt sense of injustice. She was not looking for ‘revenge’; it was important for her that there would be no names mentioned, which she secured both in the middle and at the end of the interview.

Sylvi Ahola’s integrity and respect for other people showed throughout the interview, as she told about the situations in which she had found herself having to cope. In witnessing everyday pettiness and survival, some of these stories follow the development of war to peace and became descriptions of war’s impact on people and

society. The evacuations were handled by private people providing lodgings, which was in itself quite remarkable. In a difficult situation, people reacted differently. Some could cope better with sharing their houses and encountering newcomers; for some, it was not easy to open one's door to war refugees and continue living with them until they found a new home. One of the most difficult situations for Sylvi Ahola was living in other people's homes. Sylvi Ahola stressed that she was mostly received with kindness. There were also situations when she must have felt like an intruder, and which made her desire for a place of her own sound very reasonable. One of these stories was described earlier and concerns the landlady who was particularly careful with money. Her relationship with Sylvi Ahola was at first strained, but later it developed towards mutual respect. Sylvi Ahola was careful in trying to avoid confronting her landlady and she behaved with kindness and generosity. She showed an example in kindness and generosity, and continued doing so even when she moved out. For example, she gave the ex-landlady a piece of meat after every autumn's slaughter of animals. Influenced by such persistent goodness, the landlady was somewhat cured of her parsimony and became a friend who could also give presents.

After the landlady died, Sylvi Ahola took a geranium to her grave every summer. When she could not walk longer distances, her daughter-in-law took over. Now she brings the geraniums to the cemetery to both the landlady's and the neighbour's grave. This is the neighbour that had tried to cheat Sylvi with the plot purchase. Sylvi Ahola said, as though it was the most natural thing: "We put the flowers there, since we are still alive, and the graves don't have to be all empty" (SA 2001, p. 152). In these war stories, first there was the physical war between countries which ended officially in a peace agreement, but the everyday struggle continued, now between people who had been in various ways affected by the armed conflict. Eventually, these people dealt with the consequences of war, they settled and made the best of the situation. People adapted and started liking each other. Sylvi Ahola's landlady understood that her tenant was a good person and a part of the community. The teaser of Helmi Parikka's son realized that they were the young men of the same age with similar kinds of goals.

Helmi Parikka's personal strategy for managing difficulties was to laugh a little when she saw the opportunity. Her humour covered language, habits, men, to name a few targets. She was not a person who would be cracking jokes, though. Her humour was combined with irony. In the interview situation, this humour was present as glimpses into what she thought and did in various situations. The description of her first evacuation journey was every bit as serious as anybody's. As the journey proceeded, she started to pay attention to the side of it which is not very often referred to in depictions of escaping from a war: she found some humour in the incidents. She did not travel abroad, but the places, people and dialects she encountered were new, and these unfamiliar ways appeared sometimes funny. She had just got married, but she was still a young woman away from home for the first time in her life:

Helmi Parikka: (...) We arrived at the station in the night. It was packed with men to receive us. These girls who were neighbours said that we should go to one place and stay together and told me, you go and try to make it happen. I went to the crowd of men where we were being dealt out [laughs]. I said that we had thirteen cows and we would need a cowshed for them. They said that in Laitila there is an old cowshed, a man said, a little old man. He said that they had got a new one built and they have an old one where the cows would fit. I said that there were five caretakers [gives a laugh]. I will not, I can take the mosquitoes⁵², but I won't take the girls, he said. We can take them and we take care of them by ourselves, I said that we have brought them over from Karelia in this freezing temperature and we got them here alive, so we won't give them to a stranger. It was about to break into a quarrel, but then, the ones in charge, they ordered that the cows will have to be taken to the cowshed in Laitila. Well, we had loaded all our stuff in the open carriages in Käkisalmi. We had smuggled a radio, a big one that we had just bought in the spring. It was on loud all through the summer, when we were working outdoors, the radio was on the window sill. When the situation was such we were listening to it a lot, and my older sister said that we will rather leave the bread at home, but we will not leave the radio to the Ruskies [Russians]. It was well wrapped inside a blanket. When they were loading the train they said, what is this, when this is so heavy. We said that it was food stuff for three [laughs]. And that way we got it. We stayed with that patron

⁵² In the dialect of the region a cow is called 'itikka', which translates as 'a mosquito'. In all the other regions of the country, a mosquito is an insect.

waiting for the train carriage to be unloaded. (...) All the people of the village had gathered there, when the evacuees were taken only to one house in Laitila. When we got to the yard, the matron of the house came out to ask, what was it that took you so long. The patron said that we got the mosquitoes fast but the gadgets took longer. We started to laugh a little, because the cows were mosquitoes and the tools were gadgets. Back in Karelia, it was a bit of a naughty word.

JL: Yeah, it was. [I happened to know that a ‘gadget’ referred to a woman’s private part.]

Sylvi Ahola: It was amusing when they [the soldiers] came for a holiday there and complained that to fight was not a problem but they were lacking in gadgets [laughs]. (SA 2001, pp. 10–13)

In her eighty-sixth year, when telling about these times she appeared as a young woman with a glint of humour in her eyes. “Yes, we had fun. It was fun the whole way around, and we were young there. The youngest one was sixteen, the clerk’s daughter”, she continued (SA 2001, p. 14). However, she included in this sentence something of the future, in her technique of telling forward, as I have referred to it earlier. When the first evacuation happened there could still be a bit of adventure in the middle of all the worry. Neither she nor anybody knew that there would be another such journey ahead. During the second evacuation, she would be travelling with two young children and be caught in the bombings where many people lost their lives. Later she would find out that her husband had died in the same attacks that she was caught in with their children.

Rachel Gouin (2004, p. 27) started looking at humour incidentally, when she noticed its presence in the transcripts of interviews she had conducted with social justice activists. I cannot say that one of the key words in my research plan was humour, either. Loss is seldom dealt with in proximity to humour; nothing in the research literature prepared me for having to pay attention to humour. Because of this, for example, Helmi Parikka’s partly hilarious description of her evacuation journey was a revelation. Yet I had not been expecting the women interviewed to be unreservedly serious. I was interested in examining their ways of telling about their losses, but I do not think that I had a preconceived idea of a war widow as a gloomy or a sad person, or that their stories would be only one kind of thing. As a matter of fact, during my

research process many people talked to me about their parents or grandparents dwelling on their losses. This does not mean that they would have been miserable all the time, but personally my only experience of a war widow was my widowed grandmother and she was more on the exuberant and excessive side. She was not a 'merry widow', whatever that means, but a very hard-working farmer woman who enjoyed good food, having a sauna on Saturday evenings and listening to the service on Sunday mornings on the radio (after she stopped going to the church because of her bad legs). Accordingly, it did not occur to me to think of the widows from the point of view of them being 'weak' or 'victims'. If I had, this might have had consequences for my behaviour in the research encounters or the way I would have expected them to speak.

Thus laughing together, even though only occasionally, with the war widows during the interviews was not something I had noticed before I had got to my interview with Helmi Parikka, where I found myself admiring her ability to see the small funny details in the middle of the most miserable situation of her life, a wartime flight. A good sense of humour had not caught my attention during the previous interviews because I regarded this as the normal state of being. Helmi Parikka broke this 'code' and made humour show by using a genre that was not attached to telling about the consequences of war. There was nothing 'hard' or 'dangerous' about her description of five young women standing in a snow-covered yard somewhere that is strange to me, giggling at hearing how their cows are called mosquitoes and nearly bursting out laughing when their precious radio is called by a word that is the name of women's private part in their own dialect. The previous interviewees had not been particularly dry in their mode of expression, but in Helmi Parikka's interview this thread of humour was made clearly visible and audible.

Gouin (2004, p. 32) has identified recurring themes and purposes around which humour is organized, such as identity and group formation, resistance, resilience and coping. This proved useful in my thinking about the context of the war widow interviews, with the difference that most of the situations where humour was needed by them included elements of these four purposes together. One of the main

situations where humour came in handy was the constant issue regarding suggestions about partnership. Helmi Parikka had paid a man to do some plumbing, when he started saying the place could be made fine if they got together. He was already designing a new cowshed, when Helmi Parikka, who was milking the cows, suggested that in this case he would have to run the machines himself since there was no electricity in the house. “Sometimes I had such fun at their expense”, she concluded (HP 2001, p. 51). Another time a local bachelor came frequently to see the building site that Helmi Parikka had, and asked her once if all the land was in Helmi’s own name or her mother’s name. “I should have asked him to come inside for my mother to make coffee for him!”, she laughed out loud and I could only join her contagious laughter (HP 2001, pp. 83–84). However, these same kinds of situations could also be those where not even humour helped, as when Bertta Kaukinen was attacked in the office by a woman who thought that her husband had looked at Bertta too keenly, or when Kyllikki Iloranta was physically assaulted by a long-term neighbour.

Expressing humour in the interview encounters was only to a small extent a matter of telling a good story. Mostly the stories were serious. Humour was more an all-encompassing expression of an attitude to life that was a combination of a rather morbid sense of survival, as well as focussing their strength on positive things. Women’s houses, women’s land and women’s business were guided by principles of everyday practical taking care of the unit that one had. Sylvi Ahola described her husband being smashed by machine gun fire and his wallet torn into two halves because of this, after which she tranquilly asked me to have some more of her homemade bun plait. It was natural for her to put life and death into the same sentence. Life and death had had so many confrontations in her life that they were not rivals anymore but equals. There was nothing unusual in facing death, either. Four of her girl friends, out of a circle of six childhood friends, lost their husbands in the war while one of the husbands had already died before the war:

Sylvi Ahola: (...) We were six girls in Koskela. All born the same year, 1912. We lost five, four of us lost their husbands. One lost hers before

his time, to a normal sickness. We were ill-fated, that's what we were.
(SA 2001, p. 84)

When Sylvi Ahola first mentioned the girls from the Koskela village and what happened to them, it was in the middle of her talking about so many other things that I did not really notice what she said. We were talking about her war widow status and if this was acknowledged for receiving a pension. She told me that she had once been offered a medal but she could not accept it: I understood that she would have had to travel, but could not leave the cows. This was associated in her mind with the situation in Karelia during the evacuation when she had to leave the animals, and from that she jumped to the six girls. I could not follow at all and asked her what these girls had to do with the story that she had started. Then her son came in, the situation changed and the subject of the six girls was forgotten for a while. Much later I understood why she had mentioned the six girls precisely when she did. She probably meant that all of these six girls had gone through similar experiences and all would have been worth the credit. The Koskela girls were spoken about again later and they turned out to be an important group of peers for her. At one stage in the interview, she was talking about a friend of hers and how close they were. I asked if the friend ever remarried, to which Sylvi Ahola answered: "No. Nobody of us did, or one did" (SA 2001, p. 137). My confusion showed (JL 2001, p. 137): "Who are the others? Which others do You mean?" She returned to talking about the friends she grew up with in the same village. They went to school together and were confirmed at the same time: "Five [lost their husbands]. Miina second, Rauni third, me fourth and Hilikka fifth" (SA 2001, p. 141). She kept in touch with two of them more closely, but she was aware of the whereabouts of all of them.

These were familiar names that could also come up in other contexts, for example, in the published books on Karelians. One of the girls had moved to Sweden, and Sylvi Ahola had found a description of her life there in a book. While she was telling me about this, I remembered another photograph, taken of seven young women and a baby in a meadow somewhere probably close to my great-grandfather's house in Karelia. Sylvi Ahola did not come from the same village as the women in this photograph, but in a way she still answered my question about what will happen to

the girls in the photograph because of war, which I discussed in ‘Thought Zones’ earlier in the thesis. Unfortunately, there was no happy end; five of the six girls from Koskela lost their husbands, and four of the men died in the war.

Helmi Parikka and Sylvi Ahola gathered information on the issues of war through literature: it was not a subject to avoid, but rather to remember and commemorate. At one point, Helmi Parikka had subscribed to three book clubs simultaneously. She had left most of her hundreds of books ‘at home’, as she named the farm house, besides calling home the lost place in Karelia. A lot of what she read about was history. Sylvi Ahola was keen on reading, too, and often she could identify with the person writing:

Sylvi Ahola: I just got one book as a present from the Karelian society [her birthday]. He is from the same village as I am. I was thinking that it was just like I would [write], since one remembers... When one moved from house to house, just kept moving. It was the same fate for nearly everybody. (SA 2001, p. 63)

The literature on war and evacuation was discussed by the whole Ahola family. Her son organized a coffee break – his mother had just told me how her son was eager as a child to make coffee for visitors – and I raised the issue of him being at school and how it had been for him. At first he said that it was odd that he was asked this, as nobody had asked him anything about this before, and he also referred to a book on war orphans that had been recently published (Malmi 2001). Also his wife had inquired him about being a war orphan. Her own sister had been sent to Sweden as a ‘war child’ [the figures for the number of children sent abroad away from the war vary from 70,000 to 80,000 children]. She had been interested in the war child and orphan organizations that were only recently starting to be founded and wondered if Elias, her husband and Sylvi’s son, had thought of joining. He was of the opinion that such matters belonged to the past. I told him about my conversation with Kyllikki Iloranta and about her finding out only through being interviewed that her daughters had been teased at school because of their Karelian origin. When he heard this, he changed his opinion about wanting to talk about such things from the past: “Now when you take up such an issue. Is that on now [the tape recorder]?/Jl: “I have

it on all the time, so [a nervous gulp of coffee]. But these talks will not go anywhere just as they are. /The son: “Turn it off now”. /JL: [turns off the recorder].

In the middle of the interview with his mother, Sylvi Ahola's son started to talk about his private memories, which he wanted to remain private. Kyllikki Iloranta had commented to me that her child had revealed what she had experienced as a child. Sylvi Ahola did not comment, though. Perhaps she was more aware if something had happened at school than her son realized, because she worked there herself. Helmi Parikka remembered to the word her son being called with names at school: “What about you, you evacuated boy, when you don't even have a father” (HP 2001, p. 52). The issue of remembering was discussed in both the Ahola and the Parikka families. Sylvi Ahola and her son Elias changed roles in knowing and not knowing a couple of times during the part of the interview which he joined. This came out concerning different comments about what the other person remembered, mostly from the son directed to his mother. Sylvi Ahola had earlier said that her son had not asked her much about the time of war, although she had tried to tell him anyway about how it had been, ‘at home’:

JL: Have you told your son about the times of war and other things. Have they been asking, these younger people?

Sylvi Ahola: I think he has asked very little. But then he cannot even remember his father.

JL: He can't when he was so small.

Sylvi Ahola: Yes. So small. But I have always talked, I just don't know what has stayed with him.

JL: What kinds of things have you talked about?

Sylvi Ahola: How it was at home and... It was hard manual work, like threshing the rye by hand. Now machines are used for everything. He was already in his fifth year when we left home, for the last time. He visited once there at home. There were other people who showed him our place. He had no recollection of the place himself. Some boys of his age, they try to remember. He has no such friends, I guess he has been a lot with me. Well he had his grandma for a while with us, too.

We were there at home in-between [the wars]. But now we have not been there, I was there only that once. (SA 2001, pp. 51–52)

Helmi Parikka too did not think that there had been many people who had asked her about the past.

JL: When you have been telling about these times of change and such, have you had people that you have talked with. Have you had people around you who have wanted to reminiscence with you about leaving...?

Helmi Parikka: No, I haven't. It is just a handful that would ask. Occasionally, yes. But now my head is all confused, I don't remember or know anything.

JL: It has been such a warm day, and we have managed this much talk.

Helmi Parikka: How about if I make a cup of coffee before you leave? (HP 2001, pp. 91–92)

Sylvi Ahola ended her interview by stating that “[t]his is the way it has been. And maybe the rest of the time, too. Let me show You now...” (SA 2001, p. 157). She wanted to show me some of her handiwork and the curtains her daughter-in-law had woven. The curtains and tablecloths that she had herself woven had stayed in the house in Karelia: the curtains at the windows, the tablecloths on the tables. She had planned to return. Helmi Parikka also showed me her finest pieces of handiwork, such as an immensely dense wall rug, and insisted on me choosing a pair of white hand-knitted woollen mittens. Then she sent me off, standing exactly in the same place where she had waited for me to arrive. I knew this feeling from before: my grandmother always sat in her rocking chair when we drove off from her country place on Sunday afternoons. She waved through the window, and I looked back as long as I could see her from behind all the trees. I imagined that Helmi Parikka turned around after a while, went in, rinsed the coffee cups, took her knitting and dozed off for a while doing it. She woke up to the telephone ringing. It was her older son asking how the interview had been. He was curious, because it was about his life too.

Eeva-Liisa Rötö**Introduction**

This chapter is concerned with exploring my meeting with Eeva-Liisa Rötö, how this came about, the interview with her and the preliminary flashes of insight gained from this. I was ‘introduced’ to her in a letter from her brother, whose wife had urged him to write to me after she had seen the newspaper announcement about the research. He wrote very warmly about his sister. According to him, she had maintained a strong positive spirit, despite obstacles in her life. I phoned Eeva-Liisa Rötö—and there was a moment of confusion. She herself had read the announcement and thought of contacting me, but she did not know that her brother had already done so. By the time this was sorted out, it did not seem like two complete strangers phoning each other. We had both envisaged her participating in the research before our actual first contact. And so I had this friendly exchange in mind when I was driving towards where Eeva-Liisa Rötö lived, after the very nice morning and midday I had spent interviewing Helmi Parikka.

Both of these July meetings had been prearranged in May. It was not an ideal situation, to have two in-depth interviews occurring on the same day but there was a practical reason for this, as I mentioned earlier. Of all the possible places in Finland they could have lived, these two women lived in the same general direction, along the road I would drive south on for my one visit to Finland that summer. With great luck, it suited both women to have my interview with them on that one particular day, for they were busy women, with a lot of engagements and activities planned for the summer.

Eeva-Liisa Rötö lived sixty kilometres to the south from where Helmi Parikka had her apartment. This interview was planned as the last of the five encounters. As a consequence of the interview phase of the research drawing to a close, a part of my journey was spent thinking about whether there was something that I could revise concerning the interviewing technique or the material it could cover. The most

important goal I felt had been achieved when the interviews had been good encounters and the women concerned had wanted to talk about their lives at length. They had themselves produced new angles to the research, and the preliminary list of questions I started with had been complemented all the time with new ones in each interview. On this occasion, I wondered if there was something more that I could think of to inquire about.

What was it, then, that I had learnt about the lives of these women, I asked myself as I got closer to Eeva-Liisa Rötö's home. Two things came to my mind immediately. People's lives are very complex and nothing at all can be taken for granted about them. Those two things had grouped around them a series of further issues. Every moment is a fleeting moment. Life together with a loved partner can evaporate before it has started. Disruption in someone's life can be total, yet they carry on. People tell about their lives in the most fascinating ways; these are very difficult to describe in detail, because so much is involved, including everything that goes on around the interview situation. In parallel with the intricate layering of life events, telling is also a very down-to-earth and day-to-day matter of accounting for and reflecting on this. Complexity and clarity are not rivals when lives are told. People have a good ability to think reflectively about the things that have occurred to them and to share this with other people, when they are asked to tell (Archer 2007).

I could have gone on pondering about the research in general and about each individual woman who had been involved so far, but I soon arrived at my destination almost before noticing it. In connection with the Helmi Parikka interview, I had the sense of feeling secure about these encounters, and with Eeva-Liisa Rötö this was strengthened even before we met. I had not worried too much about getting lost because I had been busy trying to gather my thoughts for a good interview. Symbolically, my success in finding her address was important. I arrived just before four o'clock in the afternoon, when it was still scorching hot and could break out into a thunderstorm, everything stood so still. I was not physically the epitome of an energetic researcher but I had a good feeling about being there and having a chance

to see where this new interview would take me and what I would learn about the life of the particular woman I was about to meet.

War and Love

Eeva-Liisa Rötö lived in a low block of flats which was well-kept and surrounded by dense greenery. The area reminded me of where Kyllikki Iloranta had her home, although Eeva-Liisa Rötö's address was nearer to the centre of the city. Both of these neighbourhoods had been built in the 1960s as a consequence of the mass migration of people from the countryside into the cities. I have referred to this large scale movement of people earlier, but when I saw where Eeva-Liisa Rötö lived, I needed no theory to back-up my observations; after my family moved from the countryside to the city, it was exactly to this type of environment. I climbed up the stairs, she opened the door and welcomed me warmly while also finishing a phone conversation. We exchanged some words on the weather and how hot we both were. The scales were rather even: we were both sweating, I was worn out after the night of travel, Eeva-Liisa Rötö had some trouble with her legs which made moving around look painful. Nothing like a younger 'powerful' woman interviewing a 'weaker' older person was in the air. She refused help when I tried to assist with carrying things, but she was quick to notice when I needed refreshments. "Can I give you some water?" was the sentence she used a couple of times when she noticed that I was becoming tired. Towards the end of the interview, her daughter arrived to help her mother with certain routines concerning her health. Recording the talk was stopped for part of that time, but the conversation carried on, with her daughter also included. Some questions indeed I asked her daughter directly and those parts of the discussion were recorded. The taped encounter lasted for three hours and forty-five minutes, and the transcript is 136 pages long.

Eeva-Liisa Rötö began telling me about her life with such speed that I had to hurry to catch up with her. The recorder was not switched on when she was already talking about the subject of her deceased husband. I had to interrupt her and made it known that I had turned on the recorder. She had been saying things that sounded important

in the research context, and thus our taped talk began with a summary. It has been suggested that the one who speaks first in an oral interview situation is the interviewer, and by doing this, she or he defines the roles and establishes the basis of narrative authority, even to the point that the narrator ‘feels entitled to speak only because of a mandate from the interviewer’ Portelli (1997, p. 9). However, in the interview with Eeva-Liisa Rötö, my first question was in fact the ‘next question’, because she had already begun and set the terms of our starting point:

JL: At Eeva-Liisa Rötö’s home in this city, in this quarter of the city,⁵³ and we are starting with an interview. First, now that we have already begun to talk about this, I ask, regarding what you were telling me about your daughter being born in 1945, and your husband visiting home for the last time in May 1944, about if he knew before he fell that you were...

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: Yes. We both knew.

JL: So he had time to hear the news?

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: In the last letter. But this part will be not put into the interview because this will not be of interest in that way. I can tell it like this. Listen, here’s the milk. Would you want some more water?

JL: Yes, but we can do that later [she goes to the kitchen].

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: It is like this [her voice comes from the kitchen]. Nobody would believe or understand ... [a part E-L R asked to have removed from the transcript]
[She returns to the living room and sees the tape recorder]:
Is this being taped all the time?

JL: I am taping because... [I turn off the tape-recorder]. (ELR 2001, pp. 1–2)

In the first few lines of the interview, Eeva-Liisa Rötö confronted idea that both the first word and the narrative authority belonging to the interviewer. The meeting with her was based on my initiative, but during the encounter it was she who dictated the terms of our exchange. During our first phone conversation, I had explained about the nature, purpose and use of the research material and how all was going to be

⁵³ The details of location are left out in all the interviews.

anonymous (BSA Ethical Statement, 2002). She had also read the newspaper announcement and was aware of the research before having been contacted by me in person. She had agreed to take part, and although it is impossible to know all the reasons for her giving ‘informed consent’, based on what was said in the first part of the interview it appeared that she understood the possible further use of her telling (cf. Josselson 1996, xii). She wanted to exclude what she did not want to become public. It clearly was not the first time that she was interviewed; she was a member of the ‘interview society’. My slowness with turning off the recorder makes embarrassing reading now. Obviously I should have followed her request right away. My only excuse is that for a brief moment I interpreted her as wanting to continue without an interruption. However, a certain reluctance to switch it off also played a part. I got a fright, thinking that she wanted the part of her life involving her husband not to be included. Contemplating that a central topic was about to go missing, it was difficult to stop recording.

As shown in the excerpt above, Eeva-Liisa Rötö had told how her husband had visited her on May Day 1944 for the last time and about the birth of her daughter in 1945. Just before his death, he had received a letter from his wife about their child and he had also managed to send an answer. After beginning with this scene of the last letters between them, she uttered a few words more, but then interrupted herself and told me not to have the recorder on. I remembered a similar incident from the interview with Sylvi Alanen, when her son came in and asked me to stop the tape for what he had to say, which turned out to be something very interesting. Now being faced once more with the possibility of missing out on important information, and my fear of ‘giving up on knowing’, it took a second too long to turn off the machine. However, as Eeva-Liisa Rötö continued, I realized that I had misinterpreted her about what she did not want to tell publicly. The time with her husband was the main experience in her life which she desired to share with other people. It was certain kinds of feelings that she attached to her husband’s death that she wanted to keep private. Nevertheless, I should have respected Eeva-Liisa Rötö’s wish without any delay. I stopped when she had repeated her wish. I have excluded from the transcript what she said after she first stated that she did not want that part of her telling to be

taped. Despite the incident, she went on sharing her thoughts with me, and indeed continued talking to me during the time when there was no recording.

This fact of the women I interviewed being in control of the interview situation had been a characteristic of the four previous meetings, as well as the pilot interviews. The participants were co-operative, but they also knew what they wanted to say and how, down to the last detail. Norman Denzin (1970, p. 142) writes in his early book on sociological methods that in interviews the respondent is not free to choose what is being discussed nor to carry a subject to completion, because it is the interviewer who controls the situation. This he takes as a sign of an interview not being a normal conversation. However – and also noting here that Denzin (2001) has subsequently reworked his views – my experiences of interviewing war widows for this research show that they do not transform into passive targets for an interview act. All these interviewees, including in the pilot interviews, showed considerable agency in handling the situation with the interviewer. This was not a surprise to me, either. There was no reason for them to lose their integrity as a person with agency just because they were participating in a research project based on interviewing. They did not have to participate. And their deciding to take part was just a decision of the moment. For example, Bertta Kaukinen had carefully waited for the right moment to talk in public. It was not because she felt flattered by my invitation that she agreed to talk, but because the timing suited her. All the women I interviewed knew that an interview with them was taking place because of the fact that they had knowledge that nobody else except for their exact peers, Karelian women with parallel experiences of war widowhood, could have. Barbara Czarniawska (2004, p. 48) sums up this kind of a situation by saying that there is symmetry in the power asymmetry between the interviewer and the interlocutor, especially in life story interviews, where “the narrators are the only experts on the question of their lives”. From my interviews, I can add that them being experts does not refer only to the content of their stories, but also to them choosing the technique for telling. Namely, it became apparent that Eeva-Liisa Rötö had more than personal reasons for choosing her priorities about proceeding. She wanted to advance in her own order, because she was preparing the ground for what was going to be the central theme of her narration.

The story needed to come to the right point for her to be able to commence telling at length of her husband.

After Eeva-Liisa Röntkö gave permission to continue with recording, the conversation returned to the time when she met her husband. I inquired if her husband was from the same village as she was. She told me that he came from an altogether different part of the country, in mid-Finland. This was a slight surprise, which I expressed to her, since he was the first person in the research who was not originally from Karelia. This detail concerning his whereabouts turned out to be the right cue for her to start finding her rhythm with telling the story of her husband from the beginning, on her own terms: “Yes, that will soon get explained...”, she said, and soon after that: “I need to think carefully. Well now I feel I am really getting going” (ELR 2001, pp. 3–4). In the next sentence, she launched into a story, the main section of which was meeting with her husband, and this was ten pages long as transcribed (pp. 4–12). Of those pages, six were without any questions from me. This continued with a section of the interview of altogether 25 pages (pp. 13–38) of largely uninterrupted talk by her about their letter writing and her husband’s death. The contents explained the reason that she wanted tell the story of her husband in her own order. It needed space and time. For the other women I encountered, their story had started with leaving home and the change in their living conditions. For Eeva-Liisa Röntkö, the point of departure was how her love began. He was the love of her life. Her love-story with her young husband was going to be the focus in her telling, not only concerning the time of war, but also the long after. The time she had with her husband was bound together with the chance atmosphere of war, starting from meeting him in a dramatic manner and ending with his early death. Eventually, the details concerning his death became a part of her everyday life, as discussed later.

First Eeva-Liisa Röntkö located herself in the middle of war. She had worked as a Lotta at the front during the Winter War. When the Continuation war started, she was immediately called up, and she continued working for the army for nearly two years. She was planning to apply for a transfer to Petrozavodsk in East-Karelia. The city was occupied for a while by the Finns in the Continuation war and renamed as

Äänislinna. However, her brother, an officer, was staying at his parental home after he had been wounded, and urged her not to go. Likewise, her parents were against this plan. She made a deal with her parents. If they could find her a job, she would not leave. They did, and she started working as a warehouse keeper in a shop on the west coast. The war set the pulse for everyday life everywhere, not just at the front. A train trip back to her parents' place in Karelia was filled with waiting and stops due to war – although the war was not mentioned directly. There was not only drama in these outer circumstances, for Eeva-Liisa Rötö had set a goal for herself concerning this trip. She had decided to meet her future husband during that train ride. Her cousin travelling with her was unaware of this, but she soon caught up with the plans:

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: I need to think carefully. Well now I feel I am really getting going. I joined my parents for Christmas in the place where they were evacuated. They worked as teachers there. I had been to Seinäjoki to leave my transfer application to go to Äänislinna [she worked as a Lotta].⁵⁴ My older brother was staying at home. He had been very badly wounded right in the beginning of the Continuation War. After he was able to return to service, and since he was an officer, he was sent to Äänislinna. When I was telling him this intention of mine, he said please, do not go. He had seen everything that there was to see. He said, don't go.⁵⁵ My father never said no to me, he only gave me advice. He said that, listen, it would be better if you did not go. I said that if you can get a job for me in Pori, I won't go. This happened, then on January 2 I started work in Pori in a shop that had moved there from Vyborg. I became the store manager. Then came the summer, of '42, and my parents had gone back to our place in Karelia, and I left for a summer holiday there. I travelled with my cousin, she was from Vyborg. It was her parents that had the store in Pori. She was 14 years old, and she was going somewhere near Vyborg. I knew all the time that during this trip I will see my future husband. The train went from Pori to Seinäjoki, and from Seinäjoki then via Jyväskylä and Pieksämäki. In Seinäjoki we had to change trains. As I am kind of hurried by nature, I was already thinking, well, where are you. I had not said anything to my cousin about this matter. Then we got to Jyväskylä.

⁵⁴ Petrozavodsk/Petroskoi in East-Karelia was occupied and renamed Äänislinna by Finland in the Continuation War. After regaining the old borders, the Finnish troops continued their attack, pursuing 'greater Finland'; also ethnic cleansing was practised (Kirby 2006, pp. 222 – 227; Jussila, Hentilä and Nevakivi 1999, pp. 201–202).

⁵⁵ Eeva-Liisa's brother was an officer who may have witnessed some of the concentration camps. This could have been the reason for his reluctance to see his sister joining the troops in East-Karelia.

The train stood there for three hours, in those days they left according to the [wartime] circumstances. And, suddenly, I saw that there he is. There were soldiers on the platform, I didn't know from which wagon. I was there with my cousin. I was travelling to my parents' silver wedding anniversary. My father had ordered a fur coat for my mother, and I had it in this big suitcase. I was arranging the bag that was on the hat rack into a better position. We had to think of something to do there for three hours, so we decided to take a walk in the city. That's what we did. While I was lifting the bag I glanced through the window, and I saw, right, there he is. It was then quite difficult for me to be there for those three hours in the city, when I was thinking about what will happen next. Well, we came back in due course, and the train left. These six soldiers were sitting on the long benches, and I shared a two-seater bench with my cousin. They had a gramophone with them, and they played nearly all the time the song 'Ilta Kannaksella' [An Evening on the Karelian Isthmus]. I was thinking of the long trip ahead of us, it was many hours. Somehow we ended up talking with each other. I also thought that if he doesn't invite us both for coffee in Pieksämäki, then that's it. [JL laughs.] I was that sure about the thing. I had often passed through Pieksämäki, so I knew that there was a cafeteria. So, he, this future man, he said that he will run and order some substitute coffee for us, there will be a long queue there, so you must run after me. Well, I am standing on the stairs to the train, here is the picture of that event. At that time people wore these kinds of felt hats, you see, a black felt hat, it was that time. I was standing on the staircase to the train, and my cousin took a picture with my camera, and I said to her: 'Will the family approve?' 'Yeah', this Karelian cousin of mine said in the local Pohjanmaa language, 'surely they will'.⁵⁶ (ELR 2001, pp. 4–9)

Eeva-Liisa Rötö then described every further meeting with this soldier from the train with great care. She had a reason for this. They only ever met each other ten times, and one of those times was the occasion when they got married. She used photographs to talk me through their love story. The order of her presenting the photos was her telling of the nature of war-time: first she showed the engagement photograph, then the funeral. There was a photograph of her apartment in the city where she was working: "This is my apartment, our only home, the place where we had a few moments together" (ELR 2001, p. 9). Some pictures were taken the first May Day they spent together, and on the occasion of their engagement at

⁵⁶ Eeva-Liisa Rötö used the word language instead of a dialect. It may have been chance, but her choice of wording could also be read from the point of view of a society in the process of change. Due to the war and the first evacuation, these two women had started to pay attention to such profound cultural phenomena as expressing oneself according to the local context.

Midsummer some photos showed them on the sea shore: “Here we are travelling to Karelia, to my home, during the holiday. Here we are at my home yard, waiting for the car to take him back to the front. This is my mum. And this one is my brother Veli. Here he is as young, the one who wrote [the letter to me about his sister]. This is my sister, and it is me over there. This one was taken by our school gate, near the stone wall. Next to it runs the Vyborg-Käkisalme road, and that one of us is taken right beside it, in that same spot. Here is our wedding portrait, and this one is when we had the three weddings. (...) This one is about our second wedding. It was held at the front, only the bride was missing” (ELR 2001, pp. 9–10). Because of war, the couple could not get everybody they knew together for a wedding reception, so they had their wedding first with her parents and family, then he arranged a party at the front for his unit, and finally they had one together with her friends in the city where she was working. His mother and sister were unable to attend the family wedding, due to their responsibilities at the farm. She did not mention if he celebrated their wedding with his mother and sister separately. In one photograph, a group of soldiers had gathered around a small coffee table. Everyone was smiling, there was coffee and a bun plait that was formed into a circle, which tends to be the sign of a feast. The bridegroom had flowers pinned on his uniform.

She was particularly pleased to tell me about the army photograph, since the men in her husband’s unit gave their stamps as a wedding present to the young couple. Usually only four stamps were allotted per soldier per month. “That was good for nothing, as I wanted to write to him even every day”, she sighed (ELR 2001, p. 11). As a collective gift, the couple got over a hundred stamps.

JL: So they encouraged you to write letters to each other.

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: Well my marriage is lived through letters.

JL: Mmmm.

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: I have met my husband altogether ten times.

JL: The times that you met with him for the first time are included?

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: Everything is. And I only ever got to be with him for three days at a time. He was a farmer back home. I'll pour more coffee, right?

JL: So he had to go back to his home farm...

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: He went there always, as he had only his mother and sister there, his father had died. (ELR 2001, pp. 12–13)

I commented on the importance of such a letter collection, and I must admit, I was not only thinking of her. As I have explained earlier, I had expressed an interest in wartime correspondence already in the newspaper announcement when I was looking for women to interview. Her answer was enigmatic: "In a while there will be something sad to hear about" (ELR 2001, p. 16). She had commented about what she was saying going to tell a couple of times already in this manner, referring to something ahead waiting to be added. Now she returned to the beginning of her love story. The couple who met on the train agreed to write to each other. In her mind, she gave a week for the letter to arrive, since she knew it would take that time for the post from the front. She was also prepared for a letter not to arrive. "A letter came", she continued (ELR 2001, p. 16). After that, she received enough letters to fill the same big suitcase that she was arranging when she saw her future partner from the train window. They had the hundred stamps to begin with and they were in love: "And as I got to know him over a two year period, there were a lot of letters" (ELR 2001, p. 16).

However, it was not yet time for her to bring the story of this intense letter writing to conclusion. I am not sure if she forgot to tell the story of the letters until later, after she had started, but I suspect that she decided not to tell me about it before she had presented some other segments of her life. After starting talking about the letters, she shifted back to describing their meetings. After a good while, nearly 30 transcribed pages, the reason for sadness being associated with the letters became obvious. After the second evacuation she lost all her belongings again, this time in a fire. The suitcase full of their love letters was destroyed as well, although she did not comment on any other particular thing that was destroyed. Instead, characteristically, she concentrated on what was saved. This was the only time she started a story that she

did not fully conclude until later in the interview. The reason for this was more than understandable. In the fire she lost her first home, a rented room, which she had together with her daughter after the second evacuation. Her bicycle and a Singer sawing machine were rescued, but not the suitcase filled with love letters of the two years that the couple had had together. Under some other circumstances, she may have referred to two years as a short time. In the context of war, two years was a matter of “I got to know him over a two years period”.

War, and consequently a hazardous sense of time, was the backdrop to everything that happened. War turned time into an unpredictable whole. For example, when they got engaged, they wanted to stay in a hotel. As these were all fully booked, they ended up sitting outdoors until their respective trains left. “We were sitting in the park next to the station. I remember that it was quite cold, and the Midsummer whirl was tremendous even when it was war. It was somehow so tremendous” (ELR 2001, p. 18). The ceremony in which they were married was also very much stamped by war. When she wanted to have white shoes with a white wedding dress, she was laughed out of the office by the people in charge of war-time clothing. “Where did she even get the idea to ask”, they had said to her (ELR 2001, p. 21). For her wedding bouquet, twenty-three tulips from the finest boutique in Pori were delivered to Vyborg. The flowers were her favourite colour. She pointed out the particular shade of the tulips on one of the paintings in her living room; this was sixty years after the tulips should have arrived for her important occasion. But she never got the flowers. When the newlywed couple travelled for a wedding photograph and a short honeymoon to Vyborg before his return to the front, she saw the bare metal frame of the flower arrangement at the bus station.

The flowers had been stolen. “Someone needed Christmas flowers”, she commented. The couple went into the flower shop and paid for the order according to the agreement. She was offered a new bouquet, but she refused. She would have wanted the flowers for the occasion, not just for the wedding photograph. Not even the wartime circumstances were a reason to compromise. War may have changed the state of affairs and thus its effect could be acknowledged, but one did not have to

resign to fate. A difficult situation could be worked out by using practical good sense. When there were no white shoes available, there did not have to be a white wedding dress, either. As there were no flowers for the wedding, the wedding photograph could be taken without them, too. A similar strategy was applied to the whole scene that is usually attached to getting married. While showing me the photographs, she had mentioned both his and her families and how the couple had visited her family after they got engaged. I showed my total innocence as a 'war reporter' when I inquired if this was usual. Afterwards, it is even hard to see how I could ask such a question after she had just been telling about the changes in everyday life because of the war:

JL: Was it by the way usual, when you said that you got engaged at Midsummer, and then in August, he met with your parents for the first time. Was it usual that that there was no meeting or introducing beforehand?

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: Yes, it was, we lived in the time of war.

JL: All was different then. (ELR 2001, p. 24)

Their third wedding was in Pori, when he came for a regular leave in February. The leave for getting married in December had been an extra holiday. Her colleagues and friends attended the wedding. The spring went on, she said, and the next time he came it was May Day.

JL: He came for a holiday in February...

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: Yes, and the next time was for May Day. That was the last time I saw him [said in a very matter of fact tone].

JL: After the wedding you got to see each other twice?

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: Yes. But altogether it is ten times. In one interview it was said 'A Marriage of Ten Meetings' [articulates carefully as if reading the words]. (ELR 2001, pp. 32–33)

Drama, Enterprising Spirit and Dedication

From the first moment that she spoke, Eeva-Liisa Rötö's life story appeared as filled with adventure, an enterprising spirit and dedication to various causes. Here I shall discuss the main elements of her narrative that showed her engagement in many fields of life, whether love, work, or social responsibilities. This made her telling intriguing to listen to. What is more, she produced her story with a playwright's sense for what makes a good drama: she fashioned the events of her life to suit the story she wanted to tell, not the other way around. Everything she told me about had a purpose in the whole. She did not only 'write drama' while telling, she could also think forward about what the stage set-up should be like. In that way, she was a writer and a dramaturge together; the story was both written and arranged by her. Her ability to combine narrative and dramatic modes showed in her performance, for she was both the teller of the tale, the narrator, and also the mediator of that story, her story. Listening to her was a good lesson in dramaturgy as "treatment of time and space, the configuration of characters in the dramatic universe, the sequential organization of the episodes of the Story" (dramaturgy nw, 2006). Eeva-Liisa Rötö operated constantly in two basic time frames, in the time of telling now, while recounting events that had happened in the time of then, and the influence of that past action on the present. A third time frame was the future, which was also included in her telling the past. A possible genre definition for her way of telling is narrative theatre, where the challenge is to turn narrative into a stage performance (Taft-Kaufman 2002, pp. 19–20), a task in which she succeeded.

One part of Eeva-Liisa Rötö's talent was her ability to see the potential of the story and arrange it to have the fullest possible effect on the listener. All the time she seemed to be aware where the telling was going to take her. Consequently, she resisted the interventions that came in the form of my questions to her. She brushed these off and referred to the suitable place for the answer to arrive, later in what she was saying. The questions and indeed the whole idea of the interview was the necessary evil because the research questions were a means for her, not the goal. The main thing was the story that she had to tell. She was not oblivious to my questions,

but she wanted to wait until the moment was the right one for what she wanted to express. This manner of ‘emplotment by anticipation’ was her technique for treating time and space. She organized what she told first into segments, and then she placed these segments in such a sequential order that they supported each other for the effect that she wanted to achieve. Within sections of her talk, she planted narrative cues that made the listener anticipate what was ahead. Each section was in itself strong and fully developed, with all its possibilities examined. The sequential organization of the sections mirrored her life of hardship, loss and survival. In this arrangement, life appeared as a series of events that were often out of the ordinary but which still found their place in the larger whole. Mainly, she did not have the ability to influence the way things went, and when she tried to, it often did not work out. Yet she insisted on finding meaning between the different occurrences.

This characteristic way of telling and accumulating in expectations caught my attention from the first moment of our encounter. In the middle of telling something, for example when she was showing me her photographs, she announced that “[t]his matter will be returned to” (ELR 2001, p. 13). My interest was captured right away, and I wondered whether it was about something that she had just said or something that she saw in the photograph that made her say this. Likewise, as I pointed out earlier, when I admired her photographs by saying that she had a lovely collection, she answered by hinting about the continuation: “There will be another very big story that comes first” (ELR 2001, pp. 14). The effect was such that I became more and more curious about what was ahead. She also talked a lot about the letters that she and her husband wrote, but her response to the comment about the importance of storing these letter exchanges and the value of the collection, was just to nod and say: “In a while there will be something sad to hear” (p. 16). One possible explanation for her rather literary way of constructing a story became apparent in the course of the interview. She was well practised in the art of public speaking, as she had often been asked to give official speeches, whether for Poppy Day ceremonies in the church for the war veterans or for her other engagements. Accordingly, she knew how to address and inspire an audience. With great skill and practise in storytelling, she paved the way for the story to gain its full dramaturgical strength. She knew how to

build up the listener's anticipation of the culmination point – to get everybody to hold their breath – and she then revealed what had only been hinted at before.

In telling her dramatic universe, her story, the characters had roles which Eeva-Liisa Röntkö acted out with great talent. Her voice and posture changed according to the character in question. A good example was her description of a bus ride with her newly married husband. She delivered very clearly how her husband acted towards a difficult bus conductor and took care of the situation with authority. She expressed all the possible emotions and tones that were involved, and played the part of each participant, down to the smallest changes in voice and gesturing. Her performing the story line continued through the interview. Listening to her was such an intense experience, that I laughed out of surprise occasionally, like one would when reading a good book or watching a film. Her way of telling was skilled, and it was not acting just to make an impression. When it came to her husband, for example, her performance embodied the sense of their relationship and its meaning to her. The same tone of integrity and confidence was attached to her performing her husband's voice at other points, as well. The following interview excerpt begins with her talking about her husband, and it depicts both her talent in acting as well as her deep respect for him. The beginning of this story would be enough to show this, but I quote her here at length because, unexpectedly, she started to say something that moved the interview dialogue in a completely new direction.

Eeva-Liisa Röntkö: (...) It was a hundred and four kilometres to Vyborg. At that time there was a kind of a box for smokers in the rear of the buses. You could get in there through the back door. The bus was full up. It had a woman conductor. She pulled my husband in, 'Nobody else will fit'. My husband said: 'Of course you will take my wife' [ELR in an ordering voice]. 'There is no space here'. 'Yes, My wife will fit', he said. So I have been sitting on his knee for a hundred and four kilometres. He said, 'oh you poor old lady, you do weigh quite a bit' [JL laughs]. She came even back to attack us, the conductor. So my husband said: 'Now hold your tongue. If there is nothing worse in this world than holding my wife, this newlywed wife of mine, on my knee. So please be quiet' [ELR in a very commanding tone]. So that made her quiet. [ELR laughed.]

JL: There were evil ones at the time, as there are still.

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: Yes. And when one thinks afterwards and remembers the details, so that everything had to be like this. I came back then from Vybörg, he had left for the front, I came back home by bus. There was this Vuosalmi ferry to take, a long ferry ride as a part of the Vybörg-Käkisalmi road. I had taken that road dozens of times when I had been to Vybörg. Then suddenly I was thinking that what if now [she is moved to tears], the bus was coming down a hill, what if the bus fell into the river. Could anybody be rescued in such a case, I wondered. Nothing happened that time, but this thought crossed my mind.

I was already back in the city I worked in, listening to the news on the radio on New Year's Day. On the Vuosalmi ferry a Ruponen bus [Ruponen was a bus company] has sunk [her voice trembles] and eight people died. So you can imagine...

[short comment:] JL: It was New Year's...

It was something so totally shocking. Also that mean conductor died in the accident, the one who was mean to us.

JL: When did you say this took place? New Year's Day...

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: It was New Year's Day. It had to be New Year's Eve, when it happened. It was on the radio, and it could not be broadcast right away in the middle of everything.

JL: I was just wondering since I have had these five ladies for long interviews, long sessions of gathering a lot of material. One of the ladies said that her husband was coming home for a holiday on New Year's Eve, and the bus went, when it could use no lights, straight into the water. Her husband was coming on a leave, he was a soldier, of course. He had tried to save the others, and he had managed it too, but in the end he had drowned himself. It just came to my mind that it could be...

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: It has to be. I have heard later a lot about the fates of these people exactly. There was this woman who was waiting on the river shore for her man to arrive, and the man drowned.

JL: I don't know if she was on the other shore. The sad thing was that this lady had just got pregnant, and they had not had time to get married.

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: It was the same case. It was exactly a fiancée who was waiting for her husband.

JL: Another sad thing happened. She was never allowed to have a war widow status. Although her parents-in-law said that it was their grandchild, and all. This came out when I was interviewing her. Now it is the same situation that you are telling me about.

Eeva-Liisa Röntkö: Yes, and exactly this thing that the fiancée was waiting on the opposite shore. And the bus did not come.

JL: Well, there were hardly that many buses that sunk.

Eeva-Liisa Röntkö: No, it could not be. It was a big company, this Ruponen Traffic, but I never heard about an other such happening.

JL: And it was New Year, when she said it happened. That it was exactly New Year. It would be quite a coincidence. And even the fact that you had been thinking about this before somehow.

Eeva-Liisa Röntkö: Yes, it was a very difficult situation. And I would have, but I will not tell it now, one thing, not about my husband, it concerns the time before. When I have thought about something terrible, soon afterwards it has happened. (...) (ELR 2001, pp. 26–32)

Little by little the story that Eeva-Liisa Röntkö was telling in this long quotation started to feel familiar. I remembered a bus ride that the first war widow I had interviewed, Bertta Kaukinen, had told me about. These two stories sounded very similar. In both cases, a bus had driven off the ferry – or was it from the road, in Bertta Kaukinen's version – on New Year's Eve. There could not be that many buses driving into the river, not even during the war, and not on one particular night, I thought. It had been too dark to see properly, this was the same detail in both stories. A soldier had helped many people out but in the end he was drowned himself. Perhaps eight people died. Eeva-Liisa Röntkö was telling this story from the point of view of someone who had barely escaped being on the same bus, as well as a conductor who had just before been mean to her and to her husband dying in the accident. For Bertta Kaukinen, this same bus accident was even more drastic in its consequences, for it was her fiancé who was the soldier who helped as many people as he could out of the bus but in the end became too tired to save himself. I told Eeva-Liisa Röntkö about recognizing the event, and we agreed that it had to be the same story. The interview turned into a discussion where we both knew some details of an incident that she had also read about elsewhere. I was struck by these

overlapping stories and that we were both participating in producing knowledge about the same occasion. I even had some details to add. As I told her, Bertta Kaukinen not only lost her fiancé but also the father of her child. Through this she lost the status of a war widow and the child lost her status as a war orphan, since the couple had not got married before he died. Simultaneously with telling Eeva-Liisa Rötö about these turns in the story, I also started to think whether I was allowed to do such a thing. I had not told her the name of my first interviewee, and also I had said only things that would be publicly available through my study, but I was still not sure if I should have mentioned what I had been told. I had claimed that my method was a form of participatory memory work, but this was based on sharing my own memories, not somebody else's memories. However, as unexpected as this moment in which the different storylines of the same story crossed was, it was also rewarding and exciting. I may have acted before thinking, but it was also a moment of telling in which memory, time and space melded together in a most remarkable way.

The image of entering a hermeneutic circle had previously come to my mind, when I was describing a drive that I had taken to my second cousin, in the context of Kyllikki Iloranta's interview, and this made me think of the processes of understanding and accumulating knowledge. With the double entry to one story of what happened to people involved in a bus accident on New Year's Eve, 1944, it felt that I had entered a 'narrative circle'. These were stories that could be accessed through various routes. In the end, all of them were spun into one circle of telling; and the subject of spinning the yarns was the war. I heard the same story within an intensive four-month interviewing period twice, of all the possible stories that could have been told to me by the widows of war. These two women were living in different parts of the country. What is more, and I did not know this then, there was going to be even a third time and a third version of the story that I would be told. Later in the autumn there was a publisher's book launch event, where I bought a book on war orphans. It turned out that one of the life stories in this book was also about this same bus accident and its consequences on a person's life, as well as of the effect of war in that person's life generally. These different stories and times originating from being told one story had consequences for my further thoughts on

time. For example, the notion of ‘narrative’s long exposure’ (discussed earlier) was born out of such moments as encountering one story on three different occasions, each of which added something new to the sense of what had happened and with what consequences. Every teller had her own version to contribute. In this case they did not differ much, and one thing was in common between them. But each version depicted a wartime event that had consequences for different people well beyond the actual time of it happening.

In telling of her time together with her husband, Eeva-Liisa Rötökö had reached June 1944. A company of soldiers was billeted in her parents’ house, which was also the local school building. The parents had one room to themselves, and Eeva-Liisa resided with her sister in a family cottage nearby. For her birthday, her father arranged a party. The officers of the company were invited, too. One of them had asked in the morning about what she wished for a birthday present, and she had wanted lilies-of-the-valley. While telling about this, Eeva-Liisa Rötökö had started to sigh more and more, and suddenly she said (ELR 2001, p. 34): “This will not go anywhere else?” I had barely time to say ‘no’ when she had already continued with her story. I have excluded what she told me from this discussion, but I cannot say that I handled the situation well. I did not ask what she meant by her comment, and I did not make sure if she understood that my ‘no’ meant that she could remove anything that she wanted afterwards as well (BSA Ethical Statement, 2002). I was simply not quick enough. I had no idea of where she was heading, either, and thought that I might not be using that part of the interview in any case. Her next sentence changed that situation totally. She seemingly raised a new subject, which was her health, saying that she was medically a case of her own, a rarity: “Nothing in me works like it should, meaning my health. Under no circumstances should I have got pregnant”, with her menstrual cycle the reason for this (ELR 2001, p. 34).

From her way of telling, it was possible to understand that she had shifted to talking about her husband again. I knew that she was aiming at something, being familiar by that point with her strategy for telling. The story of the soldiers in the house would get its explanation, and somehow it was going to connect with her having a child. I

just had to wait and see how she would bring all the elements together.

Simultaneously, I realized that she had embedded cues about this in her story already, when we had been discussing the war and its effects in the context of introducing new family members. She had told me then that she had noticed grains of rice on her husband's collar after they had been to have their wedding picture taken and I remembered her voice softening when she described the situation. Her family had sent them off to their short honeymoon by throwing rice on them, as the custom was. The next day her husband commented on the rice on her felt hat. She had asked him if he knew what the grains represented: "He did not know, I then told him. Listen, I said, we shall have a baby together" (ELR 2001, pp. 24–25).

Eeva-Liisa Rötö [at the doctor's]: 'I need to find out if am pregnant.' 'Are you married?' 'Of course I am' [she huffs]. 'Well then, it would be no wonder if you were.' I said that it is, that if I am not now pregnant, I shall never be. 'Has he died?' the doctor asked. 'No, not yet, but he will fall.' 'Listen, as long as there is life, there is hope.' Well then, he examined me and said that with 75 percent certainty I was child, so wait until Whitsun, don't yet tell your husband about this. When I got out of the doctor's, I went straight to the bookstore. A good friend of mine worked there. We had been together, in the Continuation War, the beginning of it. She greeted me with my name but changed then quickly: 'No, Mrs. Rötö!' [said with a warm welcoming voice]. Listen, wait, I said, I have to write to my husband. I wrote: Dear Father to Be. But it was not a long letter, since I had to get it off quickly. And can you imagine, it was the last one that he got.

JL: He had time to read it.

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: His last letter to me started with, raise his child well. (...) (ELR 2001, pp. 34–36)

Before she had received the news of his death, the Soviet attack of June 1944 attack began; this was the same attack as has been discussed in previous chapters. The company of men that were staying with her parents left for the front. It was in this context that she concluded her story of becoming pregnant. She said that she had mentioned to one of the officers that she was expecting a child, which might have been said to warn off the man in question, "We are in the courtyard saying goodbye to them, and then suddenly this officer puts something to my hand. 'The one who laughs last laughs longest', he said. I looked, and I was holding a dummy on my

palm. This turned out to be the only dummy that my child ever had” (ELR 2001, p. 38).

Eeva-Liisa Rötö's plans for the future changed all at once. Before she learnt about the death of her husband, she had given in her notice, left her job and got back to Karelia. The plan was to travel to his home, and for this purpose she was waiting for him to arrive on his leave. He had been careful in asking her if she would settle in the countryside and become a farmer. She agreed, as she came originally from the countryside, but she had refused being a daughter-in-law in the house, she wanted to become the matron. This was agreed, and they were going to sign the bill of sale of his yet undivided family home. This never happened because of his death.

Furthermore, she had to leave her own family home because of the evacuations. Instead of settling down with a family, starting to build a home and becoming a farmer, she turned into an evacuee and a single mother without a home or professional education. However, only an outsider would view her life like this. In her own telling of it, the difficult part was skipped. The cassette stopped right after her telling me about the dummy. During the short interval of my changing the tape, she had moved on. What she said left out the evacuation, child birth, and temporariness. The next thing on the tape was about her discussion with her father about the importance of a place of her own: “I said to my father, listen, I do need this [an apartment]. I never even imagined staying, it would be a nuisance to them” (ELR 2001, pp. 38–39).

Beginning her life in her new dwelling place was not uplifting. “I was tormented in every imaginable and unimaginable way in that house”, she explained bluntly (ELR 2001, p. 40). According to the settlement laws, it was made compulsory to rent out or to give land to those who had lost their homes. In this case, the people who were compelled to rent did not like it, and they said directly to Eeva-Liisa Rötö that it would be better if she did not move into the house. When she told me this, her voice imitated exactly the tone of a very reluctant person talking to somebody who needs to be scared away. One argument made by the people renting was that Karelians often baked rice pasties in the baking oven, and they were afraid that the whole

house would burn down because of this. “Unfortunately, even though I am Karelian, I must admit, to my shame, that I don’t know how to bake these Karelian pasties. You have to learn that skill as a child, but my mother never had time to bake such things”, she answered them (ELR 2001, p. 39). The list of ways she was teased was long. Her electricity was cut off when she was having Christmas dinner with her family. She was told not to take water from a well, but she opposed this, saying that it was her right to have the water. Finally, the house did actually burn down, for which she was blamed. She was not in at the time of the fire. “Did everything go?” her father asked. “Yes. Everything”, she replied (ELR 2001, p. 46). No more words were needed, when these words had been well rehearsed in the two evacuations: everything went.

In this fire, her and her husband’s letters were destroyed as well as her wedding rings. She managed to rescue only a few bits and pieces. Miraculously, a neighbour got the sewing machine that she had received as a government subsidy out of the house. Like Helmi Parikka, Eeva-Liisa Rötkö was encouraged to take up sewing as her future occupation. The next day she went to town to get some coupons for acquiring the basics, as it was war-time and everything was rationed. She arrived in the middle of a meeting where she had been discussed, and everybody present wanted to give her the household necessities. She got such a lot of things from the wives of the local vet, the pharmacist and the doctor that she felt like a camel on the way back. The people who owned the apartment building stayed suspicious of her involvement in the fire. They blamed her for starting the fire for gaining insurance money. When she asked a policeman for an official document about the fire to claim from her fire insurance, she heard that her name was not even listed as one of the people who had lost everything in the fire. In any case, there was a witness who had seen a man smoking a cigarette while repairing the roof of the house.

She made a new effort to get a home for herself and for her daughter. Her father found a little cottage that he managed to buy for his war widow daughter, as she called herself in connection with this deed. Then she got a job in a local government office taking care of settlers. This job was secured for her through a friend. Her

parents started to look after her daughter, as she had to be away during the weeks, as had been the case for Bertta Kaukinen. After a while, she was busy planning to get some land, based on her right as a war widow to be designated a plot. She got her piece of land and built a house on it, although after some twists in the process. It appeared that she had established herself well in the community, at least the local building authorities were very helpful. In the building project, she was assisted by other Karelians. Mother and daughter lived in this house for ten years. During this time, Eeva-Liisa Röntkö changed jobs and acquired new qualifications. She earned her living from various sources. One of them was having ‘summer children’, who were sent from the city to stay in the countryside over for the summer, for the purpose of having nourishing food and fresh air. She also worked as a cook for road workers, who came to her home for their meals. Another of her jobs was working in the library. When her daughter needed to start with her studies, she moved with her to a bigger city. There she found the job that she stayed in for over twenty years. After retiring, she has kept up her busy lifestyle, even though she has had problems with her health. She has done a lot with voluntary work, with good results, for example together with other people she established an organization to raise money for an intensive care unit in the local hospital. However, listing the phases in Eeva-Liisa Röntkö’s life does not do justice to her way of telling. As pointed out earlier, her telling was serial and proceeded with her having a sense of the whole, and she did not prioritize one event over others, but each was equally important.

Before meeting with her husband, Eeva-Liisa Röntkö’s life was already affected by the war. Just before the war started, she had planned to work in Sweden as an au-pair. This was not very usual at that time. She had even applied for work in a Swedish-speaking area of Finland so as to learn the language in advance. “I would have had the brain to work there. The plans had got so far that I had a passport already acquired. Well, then, first of September, I was waiting for the earlier mentioned Ruponen bus [the same bus line that she had used to travel with her husband, and which then had sunk], with the bags in my hands. The news came, and the message was that Germany has attacked Poland. My father said: ‘My dear little girl, put away your things now.’ I was supposed to travel to Vyborg, from there to

Helsinki, and by boat to Sweden. ‘Just put down your bags, there is no going anywhere now.’ That was the end of my becoming a maid in Sweden”, she stated (ELR 2001, pp. 60–61). Soon after she started working as a Lotta, starting before the beginning of the war in Finland and finishing after: “The war ended the 13th, and I left the army the 15th [March 1940]” (ELR 2001, p. 61), she said.

Instead of Sweden, instead of a choir trip to Estonia, plans to set up a textiles shop, raising a family together with her husband, becoming the matron of a house and farm – instead of all this, her life turned out in a different manner. Within a year of her marriage, which was a year after getting to know her husband, she was already a widow, a single mother and a war refugee. She had met with her husband ten times, they had written a lot to each other and she had a suitcase full of those letters, but then this suitcase was destroyed in a fire. I knew from her brother’s letter and from the initial phone call with her that she had never remarried. Consequently, she was the third interviewee who had not remarried, with Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka the others. Those two women had been married to their childhood friends from their local villages, and even while I was asking them if a new relationship had ever occurred to them it was somehow already clear that they would have stayed single. I renewed the question with Eeva-Liisa Rötö. Her time together with her partner had been extremely short, as with Bertta Kaukinen, thinking of this in the context of her whole life. She could not draw on childhood or school memories together. She did not know all the details of her husband’s life even from the time of war. For instance, after his death his family sent her a photograph where he was shown wounded, which was news to her: “He was completely healthy when we met” (ELR 2001, pp. 13–14).

Her love or dedication should not have been less just because of knowing her husband for a short time. Clearly her love for him was limitless. But still it was a long time, her lifetime, to be committed to one person, after two years together, during most of which time they were mainly apart from each other. In answer to my question about her decision to stay single, she said that there was once, later, a man that she seriously considered marrying. Her reasons for her decision not to involved such personal information that I decided to leave that out of this written account. To

sum up, the plan to remarry was not realized, as it turned out that the possible candidate would not have been committed to taking care of her child in the long run. This was the moment for her to decide, and accept that her family was going to be her daughter:

JL: How about this thing, when your marriage was kind of short, meaning you were widowed rapidly. Many of the women that became war widows remarried. You never thought about...?

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: I have had such thoughts once. (...) After what he said, these words, at that moment it was decided to stay with what I had been given, and that was the end of it. It has not been easy, this journeying. Luckily I had that one job, for 23 years, and a lot of interests. And now, this hobby can also be talked about. (ELR 2001, pp. 63–64)

Characteristically, after telling about a major decision and in the same breath summing up her life, she moved on swiftly, to work, and she also made reference to her hobbies. Telling was for her a matter of technical advance to bring out the relevant contents. She wanted to progress rhythmically, without dwelling on any of the issues. Each part of her telling was given equal attention. Some aspects, like her voluntary work, were key issues for her, but she still could not start talking about it before the time that she had created for it in her timetabled order of telling.

Thematically, the hobby part of her life was linked together with loneliness, and thus it suited the telling to have it come after the question about her life alone. Whatever her private thoughts about being lonely might have been, she had a busy social life. During my visit to her apartment, the phone rang twice, first at the beginning and then during our meeting, and both times it was about the societies that she was involved in. Engaging socially was a self-evident thing for her. When her daughter was young, she invited ‘summer children’ from the city, as mentioned above. This was mostly to have company for her child, although the work was also paid. These children kept returning to them, and thus their community expanded in the summers.

There were also male role models available. One of them was her father, who always liked to play with her granddaughter. Her brother was involved in the life of the family in a major way; he also lived with them occasionally. When he married, he

said that he would unfortunately have to leave his niece, Anneli, as he was going to move out to a place further away. However, he still attended all the bigger celebrations and ceremonies involving his niece. Anneli, who was present when this was said commented: “When I had my first child, they [her uncle and his wife] came within a couple of weeks. Also that shows how he cared” (ELR 2001, p. 81). In all families of the women I interviewed, their missing members were ‘replaced’ or at least the gaps were filled by the remaining brothers, fathers, mothers and sisters. None of the interviewed war widows had to cope all by themselves with bringing up their children. It is often suggested that it was part of the Karelian culture to be particularly supportive of the extended family. Such a conclusion might annoy those who came from elsewhere and lost family members in the war, and who still had a strong family support network. In any case, Eeva-Liisa Rötökö was not totally alone in her role as a parent. However, she was responsible for answering questions about the missing father which her daughter when growing up was inevitably going to make. In the interview, the story of how she answered her daughter turned into a speech she was used to giving in the context of Remembrance Day ceremonies. She performed this speech in the middle of the interview, down to the voice and manner demanded of a public speaker in a religious and patriotic ceremony:

Eeva-Liisa Rötökö: ‘Anneli [her daughter was present], were you five or six when you asked about dad.’ She asked why he had died. It is difficult to explain to a child that he fell. I tried to say that he died in the war. ‘Why did he not run away?’ This gave me a topic for a speech. I always use it in my speeches and writing. Always, in the beginning and at the end. It is beautiful to die, standing in front of your troops, falling as a hero [rhythmically citing a known song].⁵⁷ And as I continued the story until the end, I added that this was the reason why they did not run away. And when the flag is waving in the flagpole, we live in an independent country. The sacrifices have been enormous, but it has been necessary to make them. (ELR 2001, pp. 75–76)

⁵⁷ The verses are an allusion to *The Song of the Athenians*, composed by Jean Sibelius (Op. 31 no. 3 *Atenarnes sang*, for boys' choir and male choir unisono and orchestra; words by Viktor Rydberg; in Finnish *Ateenalaisten laulu*, transl. by Yrjö Veijola). The first performance of this nationalist and also revolutionary song was conducted by Sibelius in Helsinki 26 April 1899. It was his first protest song, against the attempts to narrow the autonomy of Finland (see Jean Sibelius, *The Music, Works in Chronological Order*, and Jean Sibelius, *Musiikki, Teoksia kuorolle ja orkesterille*.)

Her speech was a natural continuation of her stressing being a war widow. I had tried to ask about how she saw her widowhood. I could not formulate the question very well, but I was interested in knowing how she interpreted being a widow. Furthermore, I wanted to find out if her understanding of being a widow had undergone changes, wondering what happened to the relationship between 'war' and 'widow' in due course of time. Was one always a war widow, or later in life a widow? Did the war part lessen and the being a widow part take over? Which one was the denominator, war or widowhood? Eeva-Liisa Rötökö had a clear stand in relation to this. She was a war widow. Her status made her losses bearable, when she could think of having lost her husband for a higher cause, which was the sacrifice for the country. I was thinking of her as a twenty-four year old girl who had just got married and had a child, and how it was possible to turn many simultaneous losses into understanding them, and I asked her about this. We spoke past each other in this discussion, I am afraid, but we returned to the issue later during the course of the interview.

JL: We were earlier talking about your widowhood. When one thinks that you have gathered a good number of years...

Eeva-Liisa Rötökö: Eighty-one.

JL: Eighty-one years of age. You considered once about remarrying. Have you thought of yourself as a widow in general, or a war widow, even a widow to a war hero?

ELR: No, I always take the stand like this, namely I have had to speak a lot in public, and as a message I have said that we have had to sacrifice for the fatherland, and this is also what I have had to do. I will however not complain, and this is what I have always said. When I go to our village festivities [in Karelia], nobody will see or hear me complaining. They ask, 'How are you?' I say, 'As you see!' 'You must be in good health at least.' I will not say the least bit about the fact that I am nothing but healthy. I will not take it that way [grudgingly], I just say that this is my lot. I will always also state that I am grateful anyway. Above all I am grateful for having a family.

JL: If one thinks, it was in this letter too [from her brother], it was said that it was not without sacrifices, have you from the very beginning been able to think that without sacrifices [there would be no independence]. But how about in the beginning, when you were so

young and a mother, and a lonely mother, without a profession, when you had to build it and create it all from a scratch?

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: But I was never bitter, no. I had found out from a judge what I had to do in case there was a death. I had to do this estate inventory, he said. But although my husband owned nothing but one part of his home, still it had to be done. When I asked my mother-in-law for advice, she said that 'You are good at dealing out inheritance, but you did not even cry when your husband died, you did not even like him'. I said to that that my sorrow will not be measured with a yardstick, it is so big and holy that it will not be talked about [the latter part was said in a very convincing tone].

(...)

JL: If there was no bitterness, then what were the other feelings, when one thinks that you had been compelled to leave your home, in Karelia, and then your husband died. Did you feel that you will pull through this, did you have feelings of survival, or hopelessness? How were you in general, can you still remember? How did it change from day to day?

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: My biggest problem has been my health. I have been seriously ill nearly all my life. But I have never had a totally desperate feeling. I had as a point of departure the fact that I knew that such and such will happen. Somehow I knew how to take things as they happened. And I have also had one lifeline. I write a lot, I have written a lot. (ELR 2001, pp. 66–72)

After her talk of sacrifice, she said in one side sentence that her lifeline was to write a lot. This could have been, and was, an answer different from the 'official' survival story, and one that explained much about her emotional survival. However, I missed her comment at that time. Only later did I realize that I should have asked much more about the role of writing in her life. In retrospect, I can see a reason for my lack of response. While talking, she was showing me article clippings, grandchildren writings, drawings, photographs and such, which she had gathered together in a pile. Some of them were attached to a big guest book, where she also wanted me to write something. A part of the material was private memorabilia, part of it seemed to be her published writing. It was a lot of material and I simply did not manage to sort out my thinking before she was already on to the next subject. I did not even manage to inquire if she had kept a diary, or what were the forms of self-expression for her, in addition to the pieces she showed to me. It is also possible that there would not have

much of what could be called ‘personal effusion writing’. She was a public figure, who had got her writings published. Later it also turned out – and I realized that she had been hinting at it for a good while – that she had been involved in letter exchanges with different public authorities concerning the details of her husband’s death. This could have been both a private and a public writing exercise concerning her feelings, hopes and fears.

As mentioned, Eeva-Liisa Rötö had already moved on to the next subject, with the fact of her writing was still lingering in the air without me having the intuition to grab it. She wanted to say a few words more about her war widow status and she showed a handout for a church event, where she had insisted on being addressed as a war widow. The local priest had not liked the idea of the ‘title’ of a war widow, as he called it. She saw this from another point of view.

JL: Why on earth did he not allow it?

Eeva-Liisa Rötö: He thought of it as a title, you see. I always quarrelled about the matter. I said that in my opinion a title is a different thing. But which one of us has been educated as a war widow? When we had the occasion for the commemoration for the last time together, again he squawked how the title will not be put there. I said that if it is not there, I won’t speak. (ELR 2001, pp. 72–73)

Reciprocal Gifts

This final section of my discussion of my interview with Eeva-Liisa Rötö concentrates on the ethical aspects of the encounter. A link exists between discussing ethics as well as war commemoration, with these topics intertwined in the reflections on her their lives for each of the women I interviewed, and similarly they are conjoined issues for me as the researcher. The interview with Eeva-Liisa Rötö was the final one of the five encounters, with the experiences of the preceding sessions contributing to conducting this last interview. Moreover, in the process of analysing it, the previous interviews entered again. Thus the concluding interview became the rear-view mirror for the scene of all the interviews together. Consequently, a lot of

what I discuss here applies to the interviews altogether, and also the research in general.

Ethics in the context of my research concerns both the responsibilities of the researcher and the reciprocal relationship of the interviewer and the interviewees. It focuses around how ethics is produced in the research encounter, rather than the encounter being an ‘object’ for practising a predetermined (and imposed) ethics. This approach to ethics is connected with the interview situations being understood as processes in this study. ‘Power’ is one of the key words associated with analysing interviews. The long debate about the power dynamics in interviews between women has shifted from such a research situation being presented as a non-hierarchical (for example, Oakley 1981) to it being seen as automatically a hierarchical one, due to various reasons (for example, Riessman 1987). Pointing a finger at the interviewer has been common, yet questions have also been asked concerning the presumed dominant position of the one person doing the interviewing (Tang 2002, pp. 703–704). One of the issues in this debate involves power being studied from the angle of negotiating the research situation and participation in these (Murray 2004, pp. 378–381). This is the approach I have taken. Even so, the empowerment of the participants has not been the concern of my research. The reason for this is the fact that the research interviewees were not in need of empowerment to become dynamic participants (Tang 2002, pp. 705–706). Before getting in touch with them, I may have nurtured some romantic ideas about ‘preserving voices’. Yet, immediately I contacted any of them, I realized they were active producers of knowledge and agents in the research encounters in their own right from the outset. This impression prevailed from the very first contact with them, before any actual meetings took place. Whether they were phoned, or they phoned me, they treated the offer to participate as a chance taken, not given. Instead of having feelings such as being ‘discovered’, they considered it only appropriate that they should have been asked. They had known all along that they had a lot to say about some important matters, but a suitable person to ask them to tell about this had not happened to come their way before: for some of them, the interest even from among their own family had been minimal. Some of them had been interviewed for various causes, but not

directly based on their war widowhood. When they were finally asked by me, they still did not consent to just anything. They agreed to take part for their own purposes.

Bertta Kaukinen's daughter had published a text about her being a war orphan, after which her mother thought that it was appropriate for her too to talk in public about her war widowhood. This was a major decision to take, since she had also to reveal that she had not been given official war widow status and why. Kyllikki Iloranta had always wanted to have books around, without managing this financially. Being interviewed was for her a way of getting her story written. She worked for this goal by providing copies of her family portraits, which presented three generations of women together (see 'Thought Zones'). In these photographs she was a young woman with her two daughters, yet she was placed in the category of elderly women who had survived their men. Everything in the photographs told of absence, and simultaneously of the powerful presence of generations and their work together for the future ahead. Being given the portrait felt like being given a task: that image needed to be told about. Sylvi Ahola too was keen on having her story in written form, not the least due to her age. When I later phoned her to ask about a detail in the interview material, she encouraged me to hurry up with writing, since her eyes were getting weaker and she wanted to read the result herself. In the interview, she kept quoting books that she had read and received recently on the subject of documenting the war-time and the evacuation, particularly those on the stories of people from the area she was from. Her desire to be amongst the tellers was clear. Helmi Parikka cut my announcement out of the newspaper, but it took her some time to decide whether or not to phone. When she got in touch with me, it was apparent that she had a lot to say on the subject, and she sounded relieved that she had been right concerning her intuition that she should participate. During the first phone call, she also told me that she had been encouraged to write about her life earlier, but she had not found the time to do it. She did not return to the subject of writing during the interview, and again I had the feeling that the interview gave her a space to 'write memoirs'. The context was that both her sister and her brother-in-law were writing about their war experiences.

In the case of Eeva-Liisa Rötö, this purposeful approach to the interview was heightened. She was a story-teller who loved to talk, and she had an agenda for telling. What underpinned this call was a mistake which she had found in the information concerning her husband's death. It was claimed that his body had been brought back from the front to be buried in his home village, but his coffin never arrived. Finding channels to talk about the struggle to straighten out this false detail had been a part of her life since the war. The research interview with its official status was a proper medium for her to talk about what was bothering her. She was of the opinion that her husband's coffin had been on a train from the front, but then the train was destroyed in the Simola railway station bombing on 19 June 1944, and his remains had disappeared. She wanted this to be said in his files. In the earlier discussion of the interviewed war widows, this same bombing, as well as the one the next day at the Elisenvaara railway station, have been told about as examples of events that the people who had fled from their homes remembered, even though these bombings might not be mentioned in the lists of that day's main events at the front. For Eeva-Liisa Rötö, however, remembering was connected to the sense of her requests having been met with indifference. This feeling was one of the reasons she wanted to participate in the research. She felt it was her duty to try to talk publicly about the case of her husband. Riessman (2000, pp. 3–4) writes: "Storytelling is a relational activity that gathers others to listen and to empathize. It is a collaborative practice, and assumes tellers and listeners/questioners interact in particular cultural milieux – historical contexts essential to interpretation." Analysis in narrative studies, Riessman adds, "opens up forms of telling about experience, not simply the content to which language refers. We ask, why was the story told that way?" (Riessman 2000, p. 4, her emphasis). Eeva-Liisa Rötö was seeking an opportunity for yet another possibility to influence the official record, and she chose to talk as she did in order to influence the listener.

The five war widows I interviewed had also seen how women, local communities and the 'everyday' had, little by little, entered into discussion of the war's consequences. They were all avid readers of novels and non-fiction related to the war and/or to Karelia. They read, because it was necessary to get a wider picture of all

that had happened, including for those who had lived through the events of the war. Some of those things still felt unbelievable, even with all the experiences and knowledge that they had. The literature on the war and Karelia was vast, and academic research on the war had followed in the footsteps of literature, starting to include studies on women and remembering war (Raitis and Haavio-Mannila 1993); the war as experienced by a small Lapp community (Lähteenmäki 1999a); and civilians and German soldiers living side by side in North-Finland (Junila 2000). These studies had been well publicized in the Finnish newspapers and they were available in libraries, but we did not discuss if they had read them, although the continuously accelerating interest in war-time was talked about. Just before the interviews took place, the most recent topic, and a popular one judging by the amount of journalistic interest, had been war orphans (Malmi 2001).⁵⁸ This subject was also mentioned by Helmi Parikka's son, who had suddenly in his sixties been asked about being a war orphan. Besides the general atmosphere now allowing talk on the war, all of the women interviewed had been active in different organizations for widows or for Karelians, either as young women or later in life, and thus they had been discussing these issues, which also concerned their rights, with their peers.

Silence concerning the war was still better practised than talk about it, because everybody had lived through the long era of political and cultural silence about the war, and this concerned the whole society. These five women had also worked as Lottas, in which role they had witnessed the banning of the Lotta Svärd organization as one of the conditions of the peace treaty, due to the organization being associated with the right-wing in the 1920s and 1930s (Kinnunen 2006, pp. 34–61). Eeva-Liisa Rötö had been active in the Lottas, and she talked about the 'undercover' rehabilitation courses that were organized for its members under the name of another organization. In this situation she had to practise in 'double-silence'. She could not say that she was a Lotta, and she was criticized for being Karelian, too. Since all the women were in the place secretly, she was not able to talk very much with the others,

⁵⁸ Since 2000, several life story collections, academic books and articles have been published on the effect of WW2 on those 50,000 children who were orphaned and those 80,000 children who were sent to Sweden away from the war in Finland (Valkonen 2000; Kujala 2003; Kuorsalo & Saloranta 2005; Loipponen, 2005b; Markkola 2006, pp. 113–115; Latvala 2006, pp. 142–152; Näre 2007).

and it was only when they were leaving that she heard a person talking in the same Karelian dialect that she spoke. Previously she had been sharing a room with a woman who found it upsetting that Eeva-Liisa Röntkö did handiwork on Sundays, which for her was meant to be a day of total rest, in the scriptural sense, but whose negative feelings were mainly because her roommate came from Karelia: “This is a long time ago, over twenty years. Everything had to be very secret. The widows were invited to rehabilitation, for two weeks, but it could not be openly talked about, it was heard through the grapevine. The day when I was leaving, I met with a woman who asked something about the transportation and when I heard her dialect, I dared to ask if we were there in the same business. She glanced at my direction and said that we might be. It could not be talked about, since we were kept in subjection. It is still the same today, but one just has to believe that it will get better” (ELR 2001, pp. 118–121). The first official recognition of the contribution of the Lottas during the war came in 1991 (Kinnunen 2006, pp. 220–221), but the controversy around membership was still referred to by Eeva-Liisa Röntkö in 2001. This silence had been a structural one, and it brought quiet, but it had not managed to keep Eeva-Liisa Röntkö in silence.

This combination of practised silence and growing talk about the war, as well as the personal needs and qualities of the women I interviewed, including their leadership skills because of their lives as single parents, all contributed to empowerment of the participants not being the key ethical concern. Indeed, they appeared in charge right from the beginning. Despite the researcher being the interviewer, I was not in a position to set the rules for how the respondents should talk about their lives (cf. Kvale 1996, p. 5–6). Their lives lived were the mandate for them talking. They knew that they could count on me as a listener, since I was the one benefiting from the exchange. There was no doubt about the fact that I was going to interview women who were among the last ones in their generation who could tell what had happened in their lives because of the changes caused by the war. I did not have their experiences, no matter how much I had read of the war or had started to develop a theoretical understanding of the genre of ‘telling one’s life’. This reversal of the ‘usual’ research hierarchy also occurred in the initial research design, where the

‘experiencing researched’ were at the centre, and it would have taken considerably less self-irony than I possessed to imagine any researcher superiority in this regard (Stanley & Wise 1993, p. 7). In addition, the researcher’s position was one of participation, not only observation. Experience as the point of departure also included me as well. This was expressed already in the newspaper call for interviewees, because this included the fact that my background was in Karelia: “From my father’s side I am a Karelian from the village Kauniskangas in the county Äyräpää”, I wrote. Explicating a part of my family history came from the reciprocal design of the research set-up. It was made public that my interest in the subject was on the grounds of personal history. A shared involvement was the basis for the research, although with clear roles: the interviewees were telling their lives, the interviewer was allowed to listen. The mutual participation which occurred in the process was not through withdrawing the researcher-I from remembering or from analysing, which was why I named the method as ‘participatory memory work’.

This was the departure point for the reciprocal ethical approach referred to at the beginning of this section. The attempt at mutual involvement, as well as the suggested possible connections, not similarities, between my life and theirs, may have contributed to the atmosphere of easiness and friendliness in talking and respect that prevailed and carried through the interviews. This was by no means an entirely trouble-free situation, though. There were attempts from my side to categorize ‘them’, the ‘Karelian war widows’, especially in the stage of analysis. I have used the term ‘Karelia-orientalism’ (Loipponen 2007a, pp. 184, 192) for such approach. By this I mean that I have had to ask myself whether I viewed my interviewees as women who had lost a lot due to the circumstances, or, more stereotypically as ‘representatives’ of Karelia and ‘Karelianness’. For example, when Bertta Kaukinen was telling about how she was evacuated soon after giving birth, I approached the subject via Karelia. I was shaken by her story of having to flee with a new-born child and I wanted to know more details about how she managed in her situation. But somehow I ended up asking a question about ‘losing Karelia’ which hardly was the first priority for a woman lying in the maternity hospital, and besides, at that stage of the war there was no such place as ‘lost Karelia’. She acknowledged my question

though, but she returned the discussion to the level that was meaningful to her, her home and home village.

JL: I want to return to asking about that time in June, from the seventh when you gave birth to when you were evacuated, a week later. Did you know already at the hospital that it looked like Karelia was about to be lost?

Bertta Kaukinen: No, not yet then. It came as a bolt from the blue. There was this military police in the village, they were local people. They went around in the evening and said that in the morning at three o'clock we must leave. You see, it happened so fast, this conquest by the Russians or their triumph. (BK 2001, p. 16)

There was a lot that I would have done otherwise in retrospect, starting with reacting swiftly to requests made in the interviews, such as turning off the recorder as requested by Eeva-Liisa Rötö, not to mention stopping asking questions where Sylvi Ahonen had worries about the public opinion. Continuous re-evaluation of the interview material has been a necessary part of the analytic process. Still, when I was looking for words and themes to describe the atmosphere in the interviews, the usage of power was not the strongest impression I had. The atmosphere was instead supportive, aiming at understanding. One expression that came to my mind was 'bounteous'. The encounters were carried out in a bounteous mood, which to me related to festive occasions where gifts are exchanged. This connotation felt right. The gifts given and received in these research encounters were either material or intellectual in nature. In my analysis of the interview transcripts, the nature of the meeting as exchanging gifts is illuminated. Both the concrete gifts and those without material appearance contributed to one common goal, which was in the centre of the ethics of the study: the interdependency of the individuals involved.

Talking about the experiences of life and sharing them in the interviews was essentially an act of interdependency. Such an approach to the encounters was in line with the contents of the stories of their lives told by these women, in which caring for the others was the main message. This was strongly the case with Eeva-Liisa Rötö's interview, in which it became apparent that she had dedicated her whole life to the causes of others. One part of that concerned her husband's case, but even a larger

segment of it was taking care of whoever came her way, whether it was neighbours, summer children, colleagues, friends or the people in need of charity money. Eeva-Liisa Röntö was a generous and warm-hearted woman, who clearly liked to entertain. The coffee table was ready and prepared with extreme care, when I first entered her living room. She wanted us to have coffee first. There were linen napkins, fine china for coffee, cakes and biscuits bought for the occasion. I could not help thinking how my own grandmother always had the coffee table set when we drove to her house on Saturday mornings. She had woken up early, pancakes were still warm and often there was also a cream cake, decorated with slices of rowan marmalade sweets, even when it was nobody's birthday. Eeva-Liisa Röntö had bought cream-filled Danish pastries, most unsuitable for a warm day, but appropriate for the occasion of her having a guest to whom she would tell about her life.

This late afternoon and early evening session of sitting in a lovely living room in the company of a most talkative person and having coffee and cream pastries – the bounty of it – was what came to mind when I was reading a discussion of ethical practice in the use of archived transcribed interviews by Jane Richardson and Barry Godfrey (2003). They approached this from the viewpoint of whether there was a difference between meeting a person in the interview situation, and sitting in an archive and reading transcripts of an interview that has been carried out by someone else (of course, the transcripts can also be written about by a person who was not in the interview situation, and vice versa). They asked how researchers conceive of participants, whether living or dead (Richardson & Godfrey 2003, p. 347). According to them, the ethics of meeting has to be paid more attention to, particularly in the situation of consulting archived files. In a person-to-person interview, some ethical issues could perhaps be solved by a possible emotional relationship created between the interviewer and the participant, and this bond could strengthen the interviewer's ethical stance and them acting with sensitivity regarding the material (Richardson & Godfrey 2003, p. 348).

However, after working both with face-to-face interviews and later on with archived material (although not with transcribed interviews), I concluded that these situations

did not necessarily differ so much from each other, when it came to conceiving of the participants or the results. Although the situation in Eeva-Liisa Rötö's apartment was extremely pleasant and we got along very well, it did not automatically lead to this encounter being emotionally more engaging than a session in the archive engaging with the papers of people I knew I would never meet but whose lives I became involved with. In the interview, all that took place and surrounded the meeting made it particular, but this was not necessarily 'more' than what could be involved in meeting with a new person in an archive. Paul Thompson (2004, pp. 358–359) points out in his comment on the Richardson and Godfrey (2003) article that knowing the interview context is the main difference between situations of original research and the re-use of archival material, and this can be helped by a fieldwork journal recording the context. I would add that the original situation of producing material is an invaluable one; but also at the same time, based on my experiences with re-using archived material as well as interviewing, the new cultural context of the new archival meeting is similarly productive. All research encounters are produced by a criss-cross of contributing factors, both physical and mental or intellectual in nature. Also re-using material produced for another purpose, or meeting with people whose lives are read about, not met with face-to-face, similarly takes place in time and space and is influenced by feelings attached to these people and to such material.

Under the circumstances, why should it be assumed that a face-to-face situation and a session in an archive would necessarily lead to differing ethical conduct? What makes archive meetings less interdependent than the session with Eeva-Liisa Rötö, with whom I spent just one afternoon, while I returned to the archives for two years in a row? In each research process, there can be differences between the time and the depth of acquainting oneself with people's lives. I started by interviewing and I knew these individual women for a longer period of time than the women who wrote their life stories for the archive or added letters to their pension applications. At first, I thought that I knew the interviewees better, especially while I was struggling to find a way to analyse the material (I referred to this long phase in discussing 'Puzzles and Epiphanies'). Yet on second thought, this sense of knowing was not based on the

meetings themselves, but on the time span. I started with the interviews, which made the time spent with the materials longer but it also encompassed the period of archival work as well. This was not a matter of the quality of the meetings with the women *per se*. All the meetings – whether with people or with archived life stories and letters – could be similarly intensive, or, in the worst case, not at all productive, notwithstanding the time or space given to the encounter.

However, after first disagreeing with there being major differences between the two types of research meetings, interviews and archival work, I had to re-examine my view, since I made a mistake in interpreting the archived material, with rather dramatic consequences for the identity of one of the life story writers, as I shall discuss in Chapter five, and consequently my thinking changed concerning ethical aspects of the archival work I carried out. It is interesting, and also I think significant, that I had different responses to different components of the research. This was not simply a matter of my feeling positive because of 'learning better' as I moved away from analysing the interviews. Rather, it was the differences of the interviews themselves as compared with the archival work which shaped my different responses, a point I shall return to. Most importantly, I realized that the archived transcribed interviews and archived documents of lives are new negotiative encounters, as was the 'original' situation of the interviews or of the writers sharing their thoughts and telling their experiences. Archived material does not necessarily make less demands on the researcher or on the outcome than did the original situation, which is why ethical researcher conduct is needed, just as Richardson and Godfrey (2003) suggest.

It is true that the 'shared duties' of the interview encounter, such as negotiating permission, talking about the meaning of the study, and explaining about the possible consequences, cannot be discussed in a meeting where one party is by nature silent in the sense of not answering back. Richardson and Godfrey (2003, p. 348) also draw attention to the qualities of the data itself and refer to what they see as the inherently exploitative nature of the interview encounter. I have discussed above that I found the interviewed women were very clear and very firm about their role in

the interview. Such personal qualities, I thought, might show up too in the situation of a new meeting between the archived interview material and a researcher newly working on them. Furthermore, the researcher would not be alone in the situation but ‘aided’ by those who did such research before. For instance, this possible new reader would not be alone, there could be ‘notes’ written on the transcripts, concerning voice, gestures (in my own transcripts such things are in square brackets); also requests by the original researcher, and also perhaps published earlier analyses. For example, there were short summaries attached to the Karelian life stories in the Folklore archive, several articles were written on these collections and also a book was published of the stories (Kilkki 2004). However, the equation is not simply between what is absent and what is present. Despite a sense of productive dialogue, a researcher is the one who gets the final word when reading archived material, unless this is paid attention to.

People speak their own material with their own voices; they can ‘persuade’ the interpreter – the researcher, the listener, the reader – across distance. Otherwise it would not be worthwhile interviewing people in the first place, or for people to write their life narratives. Such material is produced and gathered for the purpose of hearing and appreciating different voices. Every interview is clearly an individual one, even when there are mistakes in interpreting voices and talk. There are bound to be errors, despite how intimate the nature of the encounter is. What is said can often be interpreted in different ways. Few people who have tried to interpret talk and text have not confronted the fact that sometimes an analysis can be fitting but also a misinterpretation. This possibility is further increased when there is a need to translate what people say from one language to another, as there is in my research. Many things can go wrong in that process, even when one has been present in the interview and knows what the talk is about. A new language changes what previously felt clear. Proximity or distance in time and space between research material and a user of it does not in and of itself produce enough evidence for valuing differently the types of encounters. Thinking through the connections between ethical conduct, the type of encounter, the material produced, participant roles and so on, suggests that there were chances and risks in the face-to-face

meetings; and also chances and risks concerned the close-reading of the archival material.

Eventually though, in my encounter with Eeva-Liisa Röntkö and the other women I interviewed, and similarly with the research I did in the archives, the sense of being ‘given gifts’ in the form of life narratives was the lasting impression from both. In the interviews, this feeling was fortified through homely acts of care-taking, such as being served coffee and lunch, and leaving with the presents and tokens I had been given (woollen socks, beautifully patterned knitted mittens, handmade beneficence brooches, copies of family photographs produced for the occasion, a tape cassette one interviewee had bought in case we ran out, and which she then did not need herself). I sat in the homes of Bertta Kaukinen, Kyllikki Iloranta, Sylvi Ahola, Helmi Parikka, and Eeva-Liisa Röntkö. They told about their parents, sisters, and brothers, as well as about their children and grandchildren. I saw these people in family photographs. I was nearly shown a photograph of my grandmother in one of the sessions. I met with the second husband of Kyllikki Iloranta, with the son of Helmi Parikka and the daughter of Eeva-Liisa Röntkö. I met with some of the neighbours of Sylvi Ahola and Helmi Parikka. Being generous and kind did not mean they were unalert, that they failed to notice when I did something concerning the interview that they did not approve of, and correcting me. In the archive, the atmosphere for work was similarly abundant and demanding, even when, or indeed especially when, it could be also described as tedious paper-work. These meetings with the people who had written about their lives were intense and my days were packed and involved an intense engagement with what I was doing. I named these work days according to the main ‘character’ of the day, the person whose papers and life took up most of my time and my mind. Such work was rewarding and during the archive days that also involved travelling, I used to have a good lunch or coffee just to celebrate my keen sense of doing such meaningful work.

In sum, the academic discussion of ethical conduct in ‘using the material’ might benefit from incorporating the idea and practise of giving and receiving gifts as a part of the dynamics of the research encounter. ‘Ethical’ here includes two aspects, which

are the concrete act of giving and receiving, and the notion of ethical conduct and minute reading in any further handling of the research material. This results in returning the gift, which in research takes place in the act of analysing and writing (Hyvärinen 2002, 79–80). Emmanuel Levinas (1998, p. XI) reminds his readers of the ‘ethical subject’, “which initiates the *entre-nous*” and has its origin in the transcendence of the ‘*for-the other*’. By this he means the intersubjective relation, the relationship of one person to another in which, being is a “process of being, an event of being, an adventure of being. A remarkable adventure!” (Levinas 1998, p. XI–XII). The adventure of being is embodied in *entre-nous*, in an encounter when people share from what they have: gifts of knowledge are exchanged and celebrated. Levinas presents the individual in relation to the other in the process of being. Being bounces back onto itself in the act of self-reflection, and then to the other, face-to-face, with respect in the centre: “The respected one is not the one to whom, but with whom justice is done. Respect is a relationship between equals” (Levinas 1998, pp. XII– XII, 35). Similarly, the ethics of handling the research encounter between equals is done ‘with’, not ‘to’, as commented earlier. Riessman (2000) names storytelling as a collaborative practice, for as a relational activity it gathers others to listen and empathize. Levinas writes (1998, p. 107) that as citizens we are in reciprocal relationships, and this is a more complex structure than the face-to-face. Reciprocity means responsibility. This possibility of one-for-the-other constitutes the ethical event. In this context, ‘receiving’ and also ‘refiguring’ (Ricoeur 1984, see below) the research material could and should come to replace the idea of ‘using’ interviews. It is time for this to bounce back on the one ‘giving’ an interview and telling a story, who in the act of telling is also in the position of having received other people’s stories to pass on. I am thinking here of Eeva-Liisa Rötökö telling about her struggle to correct the mistake concerning her husband’s body. For her the issue was ethical. She could not allow the story to be told wrong and rectifying the story was going to be her reciprocal gift to her husband. Until she could give it, commemorating her husband could not properly take place according to her sense of what an ethical event is, as a responsibility taken. She could not tell about it properly, either.

Drawing on Ricoeur, the process of narration for Eeva-Liisa Rötökö was an act of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration. Life narratives weave a process that Ricoeur refers to as a threefold mimesis, as I discussed earlier (Ricoeur 1984, pp. 52–54). The producer and the receiver are both involved in moulding the narrative. For Eeva-Liisa Rötökö, storytelling began from seeing the world with a structure, in prefiguration. In her way of configuring, the succession of events was turned into ‘one meaningful whole’, in which she kept the end in mind (Ricoeur 1984, p. 67). Recollection for her was an arena of reorganizing meaningful remembered events and their repercussions. Ricoeur (1984, p. 67) writes that “it is as though recollection inverted the so-called natural order of time. In reading the ending in the beginning and the beginning in the ending, we also learn to read time itself backwards, as the recapitulation of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences”. Eeva-Liisa Rötökö experienced time as organized in a certain manner already, before things had happened or when they were about to happen. She was convinced that she could sense a direction forward, as soon as things were taking place. There were chance events that pushed life in a particular direction that may not have been the intended one, but in the middle of all that was happening she kept the focus on what was ahead. In her telling, life was not a random set of events, and nor was it a perfectly organized whole. ‘Seeing’ in advance was not the same as the structure of narrative being the organizational mode for her experiences (cf. Carr 1986, p. 71). She could lose the narrative with its beginning and end, but she did not become desperate. It was her attitude of ‘making it’ which was the relevant organizing principle that carried her through the changes, and which showed repeatedly in her telling. She wanted to influence in some way what was happening, which showed in everything that she did. She helped everyone who needed help, and she confronted all that she disagreed with. However, the mistakes in her husband’s story were the major flaw in this system. Despite her many efforts, she had not managed to straighten out the case, and this clashed with her sense of order, telling, and justice. As a storyteller, she would rather see the story through to its end.

In Bakhtin’s terminology, the chronotope is the unity of time and space. For Eeva-Liisa Rötökö, it was this connectedness that she kept trying to accomplish, but each

time in vain. Bakhtin (1981, p. 84) also writes that the chronotope is characterized by the 'intersection of axes and fusion of indicators'. This intersection was missing for Eeva-Liisa Rötö, and the story did not come together in the way she wanted, or rather thought necessary and appropriate. Bakhtin names as an important constituent element in plots the motif of meeting, which is also closely connected to loss because it can serve as an opening, a culmination or as a finale. This motif is chronotopic by its very nature: a meeting takes place when people meet in the same place and time; in a negative motif, people do not meet, because either one or the other indicator of the chronotope is not matched (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 97–98). Eeva-Liisa Rötö amply used the motif of meeting in her telling, starting from when and how she met with her husband, what then happened, all the decisions that she had made since. All of these were born out of meetings that took place and that she managed to influence. Only the finalizing meeting, the denouement, remained open.

This unsolved situation was an ontological problem for her. Following Bakhtin (1981, p. 85), "[t]he image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic". Consequently, when there was a mistake in the official files concerning her husband, his memory was deprived of its chronotopic quality. To his family, he was the husband and the father, not just a name and some now unimportant facts in the military record files. In Ricoeur's (2004, pp. 131–132) presentation of the three-fold attribution of memory, the closest people are those for whom one's birth and death matter. Both being born and dying are indicated with the markers of time and space, and they need to be marked correctly. Her husband was entitled to be respected in this way after his death. Eeva-Liisa Rötö said in her interview that everyone made sacrifices in the war, but she did not mean this as a gesture or an abstraction: she had lost her husband, he had lost his life. Moreover, she wanted her loss and her daughter's loss to be acknowledged. For her, the day of commemorating her husband was yet to come, in the public meaning of the term. The act of mourning needed to be completed by bringing together private and public commemorative practises. She was fighting against the public memory distorting her private mourning. Levinas (1998, p. 107) stresses responsibility for the other in writing about justice: "All men are responsible for one another and I more than anyone else". Derrida (1995, pp. 42–

43) follows Heidegger in naming the ‘gift of death’ for the other as a responsible sacrifice. It could be said that Eeva-Liisa Rötökö wanted to give the ‘gift of death’ of her husband to other people, not as sacrifice in the way Heidegger and Derrida talk about this, but as responsibility for the other in the meaning that Levinas gives to the term. Her gift was her responsibility in life for making things right, which was not the same as regarding her husband’s death as the gift. Levinas’ approach celebrates being as an event in the face-to-face, where the face is both the concrete present face, and the other’s corporeal self-presence, which is performed by the gaze or appeal that people are exposed to (Waldenfels 2000, pp. 64–65). Eeva-Liisa Rötökö was at ease with this appeal from the other and she tried to return it through her dedication to sorting things out concerning her gaze on the other, she expected the same kind of response in the spirit of *entre-nous*, and so the concept of justice is needed in this discussion. To repeat and extend Levinas’ (1998, p. 35) comment on this: “[t]he respected one is not the one to whom, but with whom justice is done. Respect is a relationship between equals. Justice assumes that original equality”, and according to him, the relation of man to man is what makes justice possible.

Ricoeur (2004, p. 89) points out that this process is “paying the debt” in relation to the exercise of memory: “The duty of memory is to do justice, through memories, to another than the self”. Paying the debt was the ‘why’ of Eeva-Liisa Rötökö concentrating in her narrative on justice to her husband’s memory. “He was”, she declared. In telling lives, these memories of what ‘was’ are produced in each encounter; the meaning of the encounter is in the production of the memories, notwithstanding the type of encounter that it is. Meeting with the other also enables the passing on of told memories. Ricoeur’s discussion of exchanging reciprocal gifts in narrating, receiving and conveying a life story further, also emphasises the feeling of being obligated to others who are remembered:

“The duty of memory is not restricted to material trace, whether scriptural or other, of past events, but maintains the feeling of being obligated with respect to these others, of whom we shall later say, not that they are no more, but that they were. Pay the debt, I shall say, but also inventory the heritage” (Ricoeur 2004, p. 89).

Image 4. The Karelian Isthmus 2001



Chapter 5. Women's War Archives

Introduction

In this chapter I look in detail at the extensive archival work I carried out in the Finnish Literature Society's Folklore Archive and in the record files of the Insurance division of the State Treasury, which operates as part of the Ministry of Finance. This work was introduced when the three stages of field work that form the empirical basis of my thesis were presented earlier. Some details that influenced my actual hands-on work in the archives are discussed in detail in this chapter, together with the research data that resulted. The reason for my wanting to continue expanding the research base for the thesis was my growing interest in exploring the relationship between stories, experience and encounters, and various emerging structural and reflexive questions concerning the whole research project. The crux of the matter was my enquiry concerning how to claim knowledge. Gradually and slowly gathering together the research materials from different sources has as a process resonated with the accounts which are central to the thesis, the widows' stories of the consequences of war, with all their levels of reflection on experience. Every new story has been a reminder of war and loss being complex subjects, requiring a multifaceted structure and handling. There was no rapid route to coming to terms with loss and sorrow for the people who lived through the war, not to mention the effort later involved in finding a form for them to tell of these experiences. In order to comprehend what war entails, interviewing in the field and the two kinds of archival work have been necessary to my gaining a grasp of what all this meant to the widows.

In the chapter, I discuss the archival texts from the Folklore Archive and the State Treasury archives together. While the materials were collected successively to each other, reading and detailed work on them was parallel and interlinked. In this process, war surfaced to become the centre of attention, as it had done regarding the war widow stories. The material in these archives was investigated for the purpose of

seeking stories told by those who had experienced war, in particular war widows, and thus the presence of war did not come as a surprise in any of the stories. Yet the extent to which war was present was compelling, given that writing in these archives was collected for other purposes than documenting war, but war's presence lingered powerfully on within each single story. The Karelian life stories were solicited as documents of Karelian lives, for which purpose three separate collections were organized, a general one, life stories from women, and life stories from men. In the call to participate for the second round of life story collection in 1997, war was listed as a topic among other major societal changes, when guidelines for people thinking about their lives were issued. It was stressed that all Karelians, including those who had lived in the ceded area, were invited to write (Call 1997). However, almost without an exception, the stories told were only those of Karelians from the ceded area, and this was also the case with the Karelian men's life stories collected in 2001–2002 (Kilkki 2004, p. 6). War was inevitably at the centre of the stories for the Karelians who fled their homes. Often the story concentrated on the time of the evacuation and the first years of resettling, whereas the later years were concentrated in blocks of more rapid telling. In the case of the war widow's assistance pension archive, war was the reason for the existence of the archive, yet a widowed woman or a man could hardly foresee the length of the relationship with the archive, nor with war, that was initiated when their first application form was sent in. War with its effects was initially the reason for them writing an application for a pension, but it may not have been possible to think of this reason continuing throughout the sixty to seventy years to come, whenever they sent in a new application. However, the war widows' assistance pension record files have documented war's effects in everyday life since the beginning of the war in 1939 continuously to the point the files eventually close because of another death.

In these two archives, war was present as dates regarding flights, encounters and deaths, bombings, news on the radio, escapes, crowded trains, baby's bottles that were forgotten in a rush to flee one's home, as applications for money and inquiries about why the money had not arrived on times, notes of changes of addresses, angry letters about why a pension was denied, explanatory letters about why the money

was needed. All this had not existed before the war, but it became everyday once the war had started and people were killed. There was no distinction between where war started/ended and the everyday ended/started. Matters such as escape from home, hiding in the forest, looking for the family that had scattered while being evacuated, evacuation time, return, escape again, looking for a permanent place to settle, finding work, looking after the family, educating children, were all included in these stories. And in the interviews, each war widow story was a microcosm of war and the everyday in a constellation which showed what was made of the losses that had come their way. In this, war had caused the losses, but war and defeat were not synonyms. Telling war with its consequences was marked with a need and will for survival. This showed up as practical work, finding a place, building a house and ploughing the land. The focus was on home, children, and work; the present and the future.

And as part of this, telling the war has continued ever since the war to the present moment, whenever there has been an appropriate opportunity, such as participating in a competition for life stories, being interviewed, or as the more systematic documenting of life required for the war widow's assistance pension applications. This makes these stories of women an ongoing archive of war, either voluntary or compulsory by nature. For the official purposes of the state system, the lives of the war widows have been repeatedly recorded since the war, either told by the applicants themselves or by officials who have been involved in reporting on the people of their area to the State Treasury; and pension applications are still received in the State Treasury. Despite the long longitudinal focus on war and its continuing presence and consequences in the everyday, these written archives of war are not mentioned in any history or catalogue of the war, whether official or vernacular war history. War archives exist as a concept and the term does cover both the army manoeuvres and the home front, even some of the aftermath of war, but its point of reference is a specific limited period of time, 'the war'. These war archives suggest an understanding of wars as historic events, as something that one remembers from back then and tells stories about. However, the women's war archives I have worked on have not been collected for their memories of war, they have been built up for

different purposes, and simultaneously they encompass telling wartime events to living with the consequences of war ever since the war started up until now.

Besides the dense presence of war, a genre equivalence became apparent between the two archival bodies of material I worked on. Despite the outwardly different nature and distinct purposes of the texts – the Karelian stories were voluntary life history reminiscences, while the pension application letters were documents required for an official purpose – they shared a feature that brought them closer to each other, and also to the interviews. This feature is that all three are variants of ‘life story’. It was clear that the Karelian life stories were asked for as stories of life and written as such. However, it gradually became clear to me that the pension application files included a lot of material that could be called life stories as well. Instead of being ‘official’ or ‘just answering the questions’, the pension letters were often rather personal descriptions of the lives of the applicants and their families. This ‘unofficial life story archive’ was enclosed within the ‘official applications archive’. The possibility that personal texts might be included in the pension application files was the initial reason for my approaching the State Treasury. The starting point was with thinking about the situation where the young mother of one or more children suddenly became a homeless single parent, in most cases responsible also for her mother and/or mother-in-law and some of her siblings. The normal protective structure of community was not available for the evacuees, who had to rely on officials to try to secure some resources. Writing and explaining about one’s situation would have been a concrete measure to perform in the difficult circumstances of trying to re-organize one’s life. As this was a surmise, it was all the more remarkable to find out in practise to what extent the archive consisted of such life story texts. One might assume the pension applications to be filled-in forms, spare in tone, and yet they turned out to be often rather descriptive of how life was for the women applying for the means for living for themselves and others.

Furthermore, both the life story and the pension application collections included an abundance of ‘voices’. Each war widow pension file included, through this one person’s story, a spectrum of other life stories, part of life’s fabric for a widow and

her children. Besides the letters from the war widow, descriptions of the applicant's life were provided by local officials such as priests, local social workers, doctors, school headmasters, bank directors, and representatives of the associations for deceased soldiers. The voices of the State Treasury officers could also be heard through the responses; some of them became recognizable during my work with the documents. Occasionally the answers made were not only decisions, but also explanatory letters providing the reasons behind the decision or further advice. Official voices could also be heard in the small comments written on the side of the applicant's papers as well as on separate slips of paper, commenting on a detail in the application for the next official to receive the file. This characteristic of the abundance of voices was also present in the Karelian life stories. In the call to participate, prospective writers were advised to write a life story of a woman, either their own story or the story of a person close to them (Call 1997). Of the 236 texts that were received, there were more biographies of mothers and other meaningful women than there were autobiographical texts, and often a life story turned out to be a combination of an autobiographical text and a biography of one's mother or other close relative. Such a web of stories proved beneficial for my whole research project. Certain issues that had arisen already in the context of the war widow interviews became interwoven with the thoughts and issues which arose in working on the life stories and pension application letters. This thematic communication between the interviews, life stories and pension letters showed some of my research concerns in a new light, such as home, Karelia and time, which added further nuances to the subject-matter of loss.

This chapter also demonstrates the processes of thinking through and writing about archival sources, which Liz Stanley (2005, pp. 1–3) has named as 'archigraphics'. The aim is to deal with how the traces of the past are read and re-produced, these transformational archival practices taking place in the research present. Traditional epistemology is characterised by its disciplining 'rule of silence in the archive', whereas archigraphics as an analytical feminist praxis recognises the acts and processes of researching and writing about the archive, the 'noise of production' (Stanley 2005, pp. 7–8). Such analytic attentiveness to the process regarding each

document and researcher-made transformation, and also providing the reader with at least some material evidence of this process, means that the politics and ethics of producing knowledge are taken seriously, under which circumstances the readers too can engage more fully with what has been written (Stanley 2005, pp. 27–28). Stanley stresses that the components of archigraphics are always research-specific. Her own examples of the ‘noise of production’ come from ‘the Schreiner epistolarium’, the 7,000 or so extant letters written by the feminist writer and social theorist Olive Schreiner (Stanley 2005, pp. 9–25; Stanley 2004, pp. 218–223). Concerning these particular collections of letters, Stanley’s idea of archigraphics includes the selection, interrogation and transformation of Schreiner’s epistolary activity within Stanley’s meta-archive, an ‘archive of the other archive’. First, this includes the selected traces of the past deemed relevant, that is, all the documents copies, extracts, transcripts of original letters, and bearing in mind that these ‘original’ letters and collections are produced by a person in a context and the collection is then selected by another person in another historical and social context. Second, Stanley’s archive also includes her ‘ur-document’s’, mirror-writing in the form of extracts and transcriptions, writing interpretative notes and reflective writings, as well as writing formal scholarly documents (Stanley 2005, pp. 10–12, 13–14). In sum, archigraphics presents the awareness that archiving elides ontological-epistemological consequences and that classification imposes seriality and presumed equivalence. Furthermore, archigraphics also pays attention to how a researcher re-classifies documents in order to answer the externally-chosen questions of one particular research project and how simultaneously a new time frame, a researcher-decided seriality, is established, which means arranging the materials in discursive time (Stanley 2005, pp. 15–19).

A useful term for thinking about my research, archigraphics is a logical continuation to earlier feminist sociological work stressing the researcher’s participation in producing the material and how this presence is made accountable (Stanley 1990a, pp. 3–4; Stanley 1990b, p. 62). Such work has emphasized the observational, contributory and analytical role of the researcher (Holland & Ramanazoglu 1994, pp. 125–127; Letherby 2002). Seeing the researcher as a part of the machinery of

knowledge production in archigraphics echoes Dorothy Smith's (1990a, p. 12) goal of exploring the social from within. The basis is 'what happened', its textual translation is socially produced, and reading these accounts is socially organised (Smith 1990a, pp. 70–80). The "textually vested versions of the world" (Smith 1990b, p. 6) are produced both by research subjects and by researchers. Archigraphics provides means to access and to analyse the process of reading the textual translations of archival material and their further transformation in writing about this.

As a critical standpoint, archigraphics also sharpens the focus on the issue of ethics in the research encounter, presented in the concluding 'Reciprocal Gifts' discussion in my previous chapter. In my analysis of the interviews and also after the initial analysis of the archival sources, I was very positive about the possibilities of an encounter between the researcher and the 'researchee' although I also expressed my awareness that mistakes can be made in interpreting research material. However, this thinking was rather abstract until I made my first mistake, or rather noticed my mistake – I cannot know how many I had made before this, but I suspect that it might have been many. This mistake was to create a war widow identity for a woman whose life story I was reading, although she did not write as a war widow. I made up this frame in my eagerness to read a war widow story. As I commented earlier, once I realised this mistake, I reviewed my ethical stance towards the archived material, and also concerning my research material as a whole. I believe the basic error was to follow the idea of an archive as 'archiving' and 'copying' a life, whereas with the interviews the idea of listening and dialoguing could not be just words: they had to be exercised, otherwise there was no discussion. I also used the term to 'translate' the epistemological position of converting research encounters into research-writing and in so doing conceptually rephrasing and revising research themes. The mechanics of this process, and the nature of its 'product' or knowledge claim, have been a prevailing issue for the research as a whole, and I will return to it in the conclusion.

The first section following is concerned with beginning work in the Folklore Archives and especially how the building of the 'archive of the other archive'

(Stanley 2005) took place from the moment of entering the Archives; or rather, even before ever entering its premises, and as I discuss, this had rather transformational consequences for the life stories I was reading. The second section concentrates on the meaning of home and Karelia in relation to the concepts of loss and absence. This exploration includes both collections, as well as some observations on the war widow interviews. In the third section, the subject is time. And here the main weight of the analysis is on the pension applications, around which time is discussed as 'war's times'. This section ends with some concluding remarks on the chapter as a whole, with a discussion concerning my version of archigraphics, since as a tool it pays attention to knowledge-formation and remembering, and these are at the centre of my research.

Transformative Practises of Reading

The Finnish Folklore Archives is a national archive open to the public, whereas the State Treasury is a closed state authority. There are no permissions, passes or fees required when entering the historical building of the Finnish Literature Society, which also houses the Folklore Archives. The location of this archive is in the middle of the academic and historic part of Helsinki, surrounded by major governmental institutions. For the State Treasury, a visitor status and pass are needed, indeed required, which for a researcher can be obtained only after a process of applying for permission to work with the data, which is declared classified information. The building which holds the State Treasury is a stern concrete office block in the part of the city which still has some reputation left as the workers' area of the capital. In this section, I will discuss the procedures of approaching the Folklore Archives, as well as what was done with the materials, especially my hands-on work with the texts. The third section, War's Times, concentrates on my work in the State Treasury.

As with the war widow interviews, making visible the practicalities of the 'background' work in the archives is a part of claiming researcher involvement and showing its epistemological importance. This participation was also tested anew at each stage of gathering material, due to the nature of each source being unlike the

others. Simultaneously, the research encounters developed from a dialogue between two people, to involve a national institution and then a state system. Moving from an open and recorded research situation at the homes of the women I interviewed, via an open access archive, to a closed, authorised and supervised research setting, also mirrored my growing analytical insistence on the importance of the ‘how’ of knowing as the core issue of the research.

The bureaucracy for entering the Folklore Archives was minimal. A signature with one’s affiliation or interest was all that was needed for reading most of the collections there. In the same building there is also a public library where visitors can view, for example, Elias Lönnrot’s notes and manuscripts for the national epic *Kalevala*, as well as all the editions and translations of this (Finlit 2007; see the *Kalevala*). The archive was contacted by e-mail. The response was an immediate welcome, but I was also ‘warned’ about the vastness of material: the 1983–1984 Karelian life stories collection consisted of 22,784 pages and the 1997–1998 Karelian women’s collection of 5,686 pages, and Karelian men’s life stories collected in 2001–2002 was 8,468 pages; there were 238 stories by men, which was two stories more than by women (Sapo 2004). I repeat these figures here to stress the fact that my expectations were high in terms of finding war widows stories, due to the sheer size of the collections, And I fearlessly contemplated these figures, because I did not have experience of working with archival sources. I was not even scared by learning that most of the material would have to be read and searched manually, since a keyword computer search of the index with the word ‘widows’ covered only part of this material (Sapo 2004). I received this e-mail on 5 August 2004, and 11 August was my first working day in the Folklore Archives. Once in the archive, I was accompanied to the second floor of the Literature Society’s reading room and presented with the thick brown cardboard folders that contained the first Karelian collection of 1983–1984. The figures materialized themselves very thoroughly. I realized why I had been told to reserve time and patience for working on the material: with its 793 respondents, the collection took up a lot of shelf place. The pre-selection list of possible war widow stories proved necessary, since it gave at least some direction to start with.

The basic close-reading and note-taking process I engaged in was similar in both archives in regard to the individual documents: each page and item of paper demanded attention. Even with the clear goal of looking for the stories of war widows, it was not possible to only concentrate on those, just as each life story or piece of single paper in a pension application folder demanded my separate attention. It turned out that following the keyword list for the Folklore Archives did not help with this, since ‘widows’ as a keyword had produced a selection that could refer to a widow story told from some person’s perspective, but it could also mean just a mention of a widow. The first day in the Archives proved a good school for acquiring knowledge on this issue. Namely, in my eagerness to read a life story of a war widow, I managed to interpret one of those that the keyword search had provided as such – until the point when I read that the husband of the writer returned from the war. In exploring how a temporary idea of ‘the story’ was created and re-created, the concept of archigraphics and its tools (Stanley 2005), and the practises of reading and note-taking as well as the spaces in the archive, are examined. My examples of this concern reading one particular Karelian life story, the story of Tyyne Koli.

Tyyne Koli was the second name provided by the key word pre-selected list of the first collection of Karelian life stories. She had sent in her story in two parts (Koli 1984, pp. 7555–7617; Koli 1984, pp. 7618–7627) with a month’s interval between, explaining that she had been ill. Her story had been listed as a war widow one in the keyword search, and I was so drawn to read a widow story that it took me up to page fifty-six of her seventy-two-page life story before I realized that it was not Tyyne Koli herself who was widowed in the war. I had to read through my own notes to see if there was a mention of this, and indeed, I found the place where she said that her husband’s sister was a widow (Koli 1984, p. 7608; Archive Notes, p. 3). I had written down this piece of information without paying attention to it, thinking that it meant both Tyyne Koli and her sister-in-law being widows. It did not occur to me that Tyyne Koli might not herself be a widow. As I read, everything seemed to point to her eventual widowhood. For example, she wrote of a family heirloom, a cuckoo clock and how it stopped when her father died, which her husband, who was there to

witness the death of his father-in-law, told her about. Some pages later she referred to the same clock, in the context of her husband advising her to take the clock with her if an order came to leave their home on the Karelian Isthmus. The army had been mobilised and her husband had been called up in from the reserve. It was autumn 1939, after what has been referred to as the last summer of peace. To me this story read as a prolonged farewell.

My Archive Notes show the quotes that I made from the Tyyne Koli life story. Until the third line of the last chapter, I read her story as a war widow story, and I cited the passages that seemed descriptive of her war widowhood. I do not know if the notes appear like this to another reader, but the widow version of Tyyne Koli was certainly the frame for my selections. I will now try to explain something of the frame of mind through which I was reading her story, with such an exercise in ‘archigraphics’ revealing how I transformed what Tyyne Koli had written to suit the purposes of my study by the selections I made and by the meanings I read into them. The real names of the writers are used here, since they wrote to participate in a public competition and to become published; those who did not want their story published are not quoted. Page numbers refer to the collection, as the stories in question can be read in the archive, not only through my notes. For further coherence in referencing, I leave out the usual abbreviations used when quoting the material in the Folklore Archives, SKS KRA KE (SKS for Finnish Literature Society, KRA for Folklore Archives, KE for Karelian Life Stories). The passing of years is indicated by explanations in square brackets.

Tyyne Koli (1984): I came in and saw how my dad had passed away. My husband said that the cuckoo clock had stopped and he had taken the time of the death by using his own watch. This was a gloomy event in my life. My father did not even get to see my younger brother’s child in Vyborg where he said he would travel. (Koli 1984, p. 7593)

We had it busy in the summer of 1939. We had 25 acres, it was good sand-blended soil. I planted a kitchen garden and of course flowerbeds in the yard. Sugar started to be hard to find but you could still get it sold under the counter. One tried to stay in good faith about life and peace even when in September the men had to leave. They were gathering there from all over the country. My husband came home as

long as they were staying in the village centre nearby. He told me to take the old cuckoo clock with me if an order to leave came. (Koli 1984, p. 7594)

[Evacuation and return to Karelia]

In spring 1944 I got a place in the village and we moved there [in our home village]. I certainly had a lot a lot on my mind in the spring. Yet my enthusiasm and lust of life were awakened. We were close to our old place and for sure the need to plant something came back. I made sandwiches and we went there, I had the baby in the buggy, it was a couple of kilometres. I planted some potatoes, carrots, and some other things. We planted them but then there was no time to take care of the patch. We had to start packing, if only one could find where to pack the things. (Koli 1984, pp. 7605–7606)

[Desire to visit in Karelia; in 1984 the border was still closed]

You cannot step into the same river twice. If only one could at least get to visit there once, but there is no going there. Now on 12 June it is 40 years since I was there in our home yard. Our beautiful home yard birch tree had started to turn green. From the ruins one could see the sawing machine metal stand sticking out as if it was checking whether to leave again. Some pieces of the wedding present coffee cups could be seen here and there. I think it is this powerful spring time that brings back things to the mind of a sensitive person. (Koli 1984 p. 7607)

[Second evacuation]

I do not think there are many who have forgotten that day [of leaving]. I took flowers to my brother's grave on 13 June just before we left.

Again, as an emotional person, I was so afraid when I took the turn into her yard [a host for the evacuated people]. There was nobody there. My daughter was lying in her buggy and we were there sitting and waiting in this open porch. Everybody was tired. The matron came home and started reprimanding us. Why did you leave from there, nobody drove you away. They took also her son there and who knows if he comes back. Then she took a big straw mattress and laid it down for us on the floor next to the door. I put the two bigger girls down and just found enough space for myself next to them, too. The baby stayed in her buggy. This way we got to sleep after the journey. The one who was helping us, the judge's wife, came in around 7 o'clock in the morning and the mattress moved when she opened the door. "You were given a small space", she said to me.

Our journey continued. Our parish priest who was well-liked was there when we arrived at the railway station and he took the smallest one into

his arms. Come to my arms, he said and continued with how we were faced with everything unknown about the future. (Koli 1984, pp. 7608–7609)

On 13 June my husband was wounded in the Karelian Isthmus, this was the same day when we left there for the last time. He was sent to a hospital in Oulu [in the north] and once, all of sudden, he came for a leave from there. Vappu [one of the daughters] was out fetching milk when her father saw her walking on the road and asked somebody where we were staying. (...) I was inside with Leena [one of the daughters] and I heard the steps on the cement staircase and I said to her that it sounds just like your father. Simultaneously the door opened and in came this man walking with a limp. Our youngest one may have wondered about who he was. (Koli 1984 pp. 7610– 7611)

Starting from the cuckoo clock and its appearance in the moments of death and departure, I read other parts of what was written in this ‘predicting’ manner. The process was more tentative than when quoted here, but all the same, I managed to see almost everything that Tyyne Koli wrote as pointing to her eventful widowhood. When she grew vegetables, I placed this into the category of hope, and when her kitchen garden withered without care, an allusion to losing a partner seemed present. The pieces of wedding present coffee cups lying around in the courtyard of her former home convinced me that these were mentioned as a sign of short-lived happiness broken into pieces because of war, and of a woman weeping for her husband and their life together. Taking flowers to her brother’s grave signalled how she was practising taking flowers to her husband’s grave. Again, I did not stop to think the possibility that Tyyne Koli’s sister-in-law was the widow of the story. When Tyyne Koli was not treated fairly in the homes of the receiving families, I read this as a sign of her being definitely alone in the world, and this notion was further strengthened by the priest anticipating the trouble ahead. Finally, she wrote (Koli 1984, p. 7610): “On 13 June my husband was wounded in the Karelian Isthmus, this was the same day when we left there for the last time.” This was a familiar scene from the war widow interviews, when the death of the husband and the departure from the home could take place on the same day. “We left those homes at the same time”, said Sylvi Ahola (2001, p. 7), which for her was a reference to her husband dying (leaving the worldly premises) and her leaving their home with the children.

But for Tyyne Koli, the coincidence of the dates of the family having to leave and her husband being wounded did not end with such devastating results. Her husband was sent into hospital, from where he returned safely back home. It did not appear directly from the story whether she had been informed about him being wounded and in the hospital, but his arrival was a surprise for the family, who was evacuated at the time. I was glad that he was reunited with his family, but I also realized that I had not expected him to return, which was rather an awkward discovery for me. This reaction meant that I had considered Tyyne Koli 'already' a war widow, even when I had only been given a list where it said that the key word 'widows' had been used. Before reading her story to the end, I had already determined what the story was about. Such a rush to insert war widowhood into her story could not be blamed on my enthusiasm for finding a war widow story once inside the archive. I was there to detect one, not to transform the ones that I came across into such, and the indiscriminate 'findings' produced by the keyword index was something I had to learn about in a practical way.

It seemed that I was working against my own research principles. I had previously stressed the focus as being on an individual woman telling about her experiences, and individuality and variation had also been emphasized in my research encounters with the war widows I interviewed. Contrary to this, my inadvertently turning Tyyne Koli's account into a war widow story signalled that I was working past her, or her textual incarnation, with a 'model' description of a war widow story in mind. I had to ask myself if I had not started to see war widowhood as a 'grid', something that was recognisable and 'universal', a quality almost. With this structure in my head, I seemed to have entered the archive and started reading the stored material to suit my own purposes. This was in many ways bothering. First of all, the interviews had already showed me that there was no such thing as a 'war widow's life', but rather different ways of solving issues that were not easy to deal with. Secondly, my position of participation and co-producing knowledge was rather shaky, if I could decide the nature of the story that I was going to hear in advance. The inevitable question I was confronted with was, whether I was working according to the feminist or Bakhtinian principles of recognising the other as a subject, or whether I had

become the 'knower' of 'my subjects', instead. Through a selection of quotes and notes, I had created a 'copy' of Tyyne Koli's life story that looked the same but did not read the same because the presumed and real ends altered everything before them. Consequently, the query shifted towards the issue of power, concerning the practises of reading I was engaging in. Additionally, the space of the archive seemed to play a role in this procedure, or rather my relationship with that space and its organising principles and practises. I treated the archive as silent and inert, without any power to influence, when I was creating 'my archive', a miniature world of my creation, an archive organized around preconceived ideas, a framework of my own rather than that of the original story. I had adopted the attitude of the archive as somehow inert, in order to catalogue and reclassify within my own intellectual framework (Stanley 2005, p. 18).

One important element in this was my attempt to standardize what I read, and to relocate Tyyne Koli's story within this context. I started the research with the war widow interviews, and with these in mind I saw parallels between Tyyne Koli's story and those produced by the women I had interviewed. Some of these similarities did exist, but it was an analytical error to think that they meant the same. The life story writers and the interviewees wrote or told about their lives in connection to war. In this matter, there were no apparent distinctions between how the war widows talked about their lives and how Tyyne Koli wrote about her life, they were all women who managed their lives and families on their own. This lived experience defined telling, as it did for all women during war: as long as the partners were away, women were in charge, and the risk existed of this stage continuing. Led by my own agenda of finding war widowhood, I 'reserved' this state of being alone to the widows. Consequently, I matched the notes that I made to this story and created a version where Tyyne Koli was made a war widow. This made-version dissolved the moment she said that her husband returned, and I was reminded of the fact that I could not exercise just any amount of control over what I was reading and citing, for the text provided constraints. Moreover, the problem of misreading was not solved by blaming it on the exercise of interpretational power. This 'as if I already knew' view showed how the ontological and epistemological basis for the practise of

reading that I was engaging in had to be seriously questioned. I was busy making assumptions about Tyyne Koli's life as a whole, before ever having read her story to the end.

Maurice Halbwachs (1992, pp. 183–189) writes that the past is reconstructed through an effort of reflection and reasoning and the viewpoint is the present, with the result that the past is arranged to correspond with the ideas of the moment. This illuminates the root cause of my misreading. The key thing was not that I was interpreting from the perspective of the present, since anything else was inconceivable. It was instead the power of operating closures over the past that followed from that positioning which was the problem. This was exercised on three levels: from the viewpoint of the present to the past; from the state of peace to the state of chaos; and from the position of a reader to the archived material. First, I assumed the right to foreclose the past, already 'knowing' it instead of simply seeing how it unfolded in the telling. Second, Tyyne Koli was telling war, when my framework was in peace-time, and I read the war in her story from the viewpoint of peace. This reading was not free from the 'ideas of the moment', and from the point of view of peace ('peace is rational'), Tyyne Koli was telling chaos ('war is chaos'). This way of thinking had a similar logic to the notion of the present as already knowing the past. When applied to my reading practises, it meant that I expected Tyyne Koli to tell of a catastrophe since she was talking about war. This misreading also concerned her rhetorical style. She expressed through her writing the chance atmosphere of war-time, when anything could happen the next minute and she had little control over how things turned out. She could not comment on her husband before he came back, since she knew only at that very moment what had happened to him. The dramaturgy was in the events themselves, and she told about them accordingly. It was also true that she had had time to practise being calm, and she knew the result was that her husband came back from the war while she was telling, which made it perhaps easier for her to concentrate on the course of events and what she knew or surmised at the time. Yet her telling also expressed a quality that belonged to telling war. Life was unpredictable in wartime conditions, and contingency could produce a happy end, as well as not. Her lived experience of war defined her telling: there was no teleology in

war. Contrary to this, from the shelter of the organized present, I saw teleology where there was none. And third, concerning the question of using interpretational closure in relation to the archived material, the way I read Tyyne Koli's story contrary to its essence indicates that I took liberties in producing an archive of the other archive, one designed for my own personal use.

After detecting these errors in reading and consequently note-taking, or rather taking notes within a falsely-assumed frame, it was good to notice that the written story resisted such manoeuvring, just as the war widows had challenged any categorizing. This 'resistance' was not only a matter of the facts, although of course these were important. It was also the inner integrity and the precise manner of the telling that resisted 'misinterpreting' the story. Part of this integrity was structural: the end mattered, and knowing it could not but impact on reading's interpretations. However, simultaneously I had to ask myself if I were not promoting a rather homogenous image of a woman's life. It was for the qualities of strength and courage that I had been drawn to read Tyyne Koli's life story in the first place. These qualities and this reading then led both to misinterpreting and then correcting my version of her story; but except for the alleged war widowhood, it still had almost the same result. The story that I first created, and the story that I re-created, were in one aspect contiguous: in both cases, it matched an image of a woman who managed despite the trouble in her life. Did I see the women in my study as individuals or was I promoting the idea of a woman as an archetypal survivor no matter what? Was I simply promoting the myth of the strong Finnish woman mentioned earlier in this thesis? Or was this 'strength' a quality that was attached to these life stories already when the writing competition for which they were collected was announced; do people write for such collections in order to tell a 'good life' or about possible failures? At least in this collection, there were hardly any stories that described a sense of failure in life, although many writers had had enough obstacles in them. Tyyne Koli's life story was intriguing. After the evacuation, her family had some twenty temporary addresses, the twenty-first turned out to be their permanent home and the seventy-two-year-old writer thought that it might be the final one, too. She was widowed in 1973. She finished by writing that if she was fifty-two years of age,

she would travel to faraway places to help young children who were invalids and orphans.

The life stories in the Karelian life stories collection of 1983–1984 were lively and full of detail, and I kept reading a variety of them in order to accumulate in my understanding of the written life stories. However, there was none of the anticipated abundance of war widow stories. From folder 28 to folder 69, there were 8,618 pages, yet in these I did not find any war widow life stories written by the widows themselves, and so I stopped. This result cannot be taken as the final word, since I did not read through the whole collection. And a second reading would also have been needed for the parts that I did read, because I had not been pre-warned for nothing: the first collection felt rather overwhelming for my skills at that stage. Consequently, I decided to leave the first collection and move on to the Karelian women's life stories collection of 1997–1998, which I had originally thought of as a possible major source for written war widow accounts, as it concentrated on women's stories. Additionally, I knew that some of the writers in that collection were about the same age as the war widows I had interviewed, and had been evacuated as young mothers with young children, and so the interviews and the life story texts might complement each other. Furthermore, these texts were collected after it had become possible to visit in Karelia, and thus the mental and political landscape of the sources might coincide. Although I had not lived through a war, the change in domestic and foreign Soviet and Russian politics was something I was familiar with and thus I would stand on a slightly firmer ground perhaps regarding my ability to interpret what I was reading.

Home, Karelia, Loss, Absence

The call for Karelian women's life stories in the 1997–1998 collection now in the Literature Society's Folklore Archives requested that these should be about the writer's own life or that of a person known to the writer (Call 1997). Regarding my study, I had hoped that the collection would include some texts written by Karelian war widows. However, only a few stories turned out to be those of widows. This

showed up at the start in the keyword search that was pre-run for both the Karelian life stories collection of 1983–1984 and the Karelian women's collection. I also read and checked systematically the material per folder, but the outcome was that war widow stories were scarce and this was the reality of the collection. In addition, only a few widow stories were first-person autobiographical ones, and even those were transcribed from speech or typed from handwritten notes by a child or a grandchild, which added a more or less audible intermediary voice into the story. The story of a widowed mother could also be narrated in third person, by a son, daughter or a grandchild, or else a mother's story was integrated in the writer's own life story. In the first-person stories, it was difficult to say whose 'voice' was actually articulated, since the influence of those who had transcribed or typed these was often impossible to tell, although in some cases something of this process was revealed to the reader. For instance, Impi Sinkkonen's granddaughter wrote in a note at the end of her grandmother's life story that she had typed it and that the language had been preserved to make it as close to the original as possible. The original was a mixture of dialects, as a result of settling in a new district after the war. In speech, she continued, her grandmother's Karelian dialect came through more clearly (Sinkkonen 1998, p. 3407). Consequently, one of the reasons for my working with the collection was not realized, because a purely first-person war widow narrative could not be found.

The reason for my wanting to include a widow story written by a widow herself, without other voices present in the moment of production, was due to the original research set-up. While interviewing, my presence was both prerequisite for the method and a part of the methodology of participatory memory-work and a dialogical approach. To be able to better understand how this influenced the interview situation, it would have been good to include material that was articulated without a researcher present while the story was produced. The analytic idea of 'auto/biography' was the incentive for my attempting to have 'delivered' and 'authentic' stories side by side, for this would have enabled understanding more of how knowledge was produced (Stanley 2000, p. 14). However, when the original idea of parallel sets of material could not be realized, because no 'purely

autobiographical' texts were found, this also meant that I had to take a different stance, and work with the material that I did have. The abundance of textual 'voices' was productive for the research, and it turned out that the basic issues concerning war were broadly the same. One of these concerned telling home, meaning both the new home and the home in Karelia, the latter interlinked with some of the main concepts of the research around loss and absence. Telling home was also a central issue in the third body of material, the war widow's assistance pension letters. Consequently, telling home is something I have approached as a constituent of all three bodies of material, the interviews, the written life stories and the pension application letters.

Overall and whoever was speaking, these materials presented a rather unified image of Karelian war widows in regard to how they appeared to manage in their position as lonely mothers and sole caretakers of their families. They came out as extremely hard-working, and their qualities of integrity and leadership could not be mistaken. A constant gratitude was expressed to widowed mothers concerning their ability to create a home from a scratch in the ever-changing circumstances of between the wars and also in the aftermath of each of them. Widowed mothers were similarly praised in some of the phone calls to me after my newspaper call for participation in my research appeared; all these callers stressed that they did not think that the mothers had been recognized for the work they had done for their families and for the reconstruction of the country. The tone was such that they hoped for the research to provide such an opportunity for public recognition. I still received such calls years after the announcement, and again when a short text about my research was published in a magazine for war widows (Loipponen 2004b).

Obviously, it was not only widowed mothers who were thanked for what they had accomplished, and for at least one writer, the series of Karelian life stories collections offered a second chance to praise her mother. Aino Koppi (1998, pp. 1698–1709) wrote first a life story of her own for the collection of 1983–1984, and then one of her mother Anna Mari for the Karelian women's collection (Koppi 1998, pp. 1698–1709). Her own life story has been partly quoted in introducing the materials, and it included such a strong image of a reaction to losing a life's work

that it has stayed with me ever since I first read the story. Aino Koppi described how her father threw down some barrels of lingonberries when he heard the news of the terms of peace and the annexation of Karelia. The daughters came home and saw the snowy yard stained with the red lingonberries and their father crying and his shoulders shaking. The snow was not mentioned by Aino Koppi, for whom this situation was not of aesthetic meaning; snow and leaving in March did not have to be named since they meant the same thing as the flight. For her, as well as her father, throwing down the berries represented having to give up shelter and reserves for winter; the end of a stable domestic life. They were ordered to leave the next day. Aino Koppi (1998, pp. 8–9) wrote, at the age of sixty: “How good our home felt when it had to be given up. I went through my whole life that night and I could not see anything negative or bad about it. Even a snakebite felt a side issue, when I had been able to be sick with it at home, with my parents taking care of me. (...) I heard my father sobbing in his bed all night long.” Her mother had left already earlier with the younger children. In the collection of Karelian Women’s life stories, Aino Koppi returned to her mother, Anna Mari, and wrote a lot about their home, both in Karelia and about building a new one (Koppi 1998, pp. 1698–1709).

Earlier in this study, home has been referred to for its chronotopic qualities of combining time and space (see ‘Narrative’s Long Exposure’) and that war intrudes into and disturbs this union. For the evacuees, home lost its self-evidence as a concrete unit with walls and roof, located in one space and one time, and was transformed into a project over times and spaces, representing both a lack of and a desire for permanence. Instead of being marked with continuity and repetition, home was comprised of a multiplicity of times, before, in-between and after war, because losing, searching for and building a home followed each other in rapid intervals and melted into intertwined practises. The natural alliance of home and space was similarly broken, as home’s location changed from known to unknown, and belonging became erratic. It was this gap between home, space and time that the widowed Karelian mothers were described to stitch up with all their power. In the war widow interviews, the desire for a home of one’s own was the main driving

force. Consequently, the weight was on the new home, the finding and building of which was often described in detail.

Impi Sinkkonen (1998, p. 3405–3407) formulated with her own words (typed by her granddaughter) a powerful image of the total breakdown of the unity of home, space and time, when she was describing her feelings after learning about the death of her husband at the beginning of the Continuation War. The situation was stated in an economic manner: “There was no familiar parish, no own home, it felt that life was going to end there and then” (Sinkkonen 1998, p. 3405). She had fled their home and home place and moved houses three times in two and a half years. Her husband had come back from the Winter War and their second child was born a year after, in April, when the news about a new war started to spread. He had to return to the front. She saw her husband to the railway station just before Midsummer. She stayed at their evacuation address with their two children, time-wise in a state of in-between, when she learnt about his death (Sinkkonen 1998, p. 3405):

A week before Midsummer my husband left from the Kurikka railway station. I was there to see him off, and that was the last time we saw each other, you would not have believed it, but war is like that. He wrote that it was tough out there. It was summer war and different from winter. Then soon my letters started to come back, and one could nearly guess what had happened. My husband fell 30.7.1941. A death notice came, it was terrible. There was no familiar parish, no own home, it felt that life was going to end there and then.

She planned to return to their home in Karelia when it became possible, but she was not allowed to do it with her two small children. She stayed on at their temporary address, where she was eventually registered officially, and she was then allowed some land. She described in detail the building project and how it was a totally new beginning:

I got a piece of land where I could build a cottage of my own. Building it was awkward, as I was alone. The boys were still small, but God helped me. Again I was given advice by good people, even though I did not understand anything about construction work myself. There were volunteers at the building site, and my brother came to help me out. He was still very young too, but all the same we just felled logs with a

double-handed saw. My brother cut off the branches, we sawed the logs shorter and took them to a sawmill where they were made into boards, battens, and shingles for the roof. And so we got home for Christmas. Oh that joy!” (Sinkkonen 1998, p. 3406).

The conditions for living were slowly built up. Her husband’s auntie took care of the children, which made it possible for Impi Sinkkonen to go to work and “earn a living for the family” (Sinkkonen 1998, p. 3407). Finally, she cared for the auntie as well as for her mother-in-law in their old age. In 1955 she got a permanent job, which she had for twenty-seven years: “It was the best time when I was able to work, and the job was just next to our home. This is then the way life has gone with its joys and sorrows” (Sinkkonen 1998, p. 3407).

Marjatta Kainulainen’s (1998, pp. 1343–1348) life story was also descriptive of the unity of time and space breaking down in connection with home and familiar surroundings. She was not a war widow herself, but her mother was, and inserts about her mother’s life were included in her story. The widowed mother was shown in one of the most heroic, desperate and sorrowful scenes of the whole collection in relation to defying the war-caused tear in the unity of time and space. Her husband died while the family was evacuated during the Winter War. The unequivocal practice of the Finnish army was to evacuate the dead soldiers and bury them as war heroes in their home places. The war hero burial ceremony was attended by as many people as possible in the local community, and especially in the Winter War this was an occasion not only to honour the dead soldier and support the family of the deceased in their sorrow, but also for the community to gather together in troubled times (Kemppainen 2006a, p. 232; see also Kemppainen 2006b on the issue of war hero death in general). Marjatta Kainulainen’s mother had to travel from where the family was evacuated back to Karelia for her husband’s funeral, but due to the war-time difficulties with travelling, she was late for the ceremony.⁵⁹ Her husband was sent to be buried next to his ancestors, but his family had been compelled to escape their home, and the very moment when it would have been possible for the family to

⁵⁹ In an e-mail exchange with Ilona Kemppainen (Kemppainen 2008) the possibilities for the Karelians to return to their home places were discussed more. Also other people were consulted, with the result that nobody seems to know exactly how many could return actually, even though it has been repeated as a fact that the funerals were attended.

be at least in one time and place, she missed the occasion. Neither could she share the respectful moment together with the community. However, she managed to defy this diffusion by retrieving momentarily the unity of time and space as well as belonging together with her husband and with the place, which she showed through her own action: she climbed down to the grave to pay her last respects.

Marjatta Kainulainen: My parents had six years together before the war broke out and my father was sent to defend home and his native land. I was four, when he fell in the Winter War [unclear note]⁶⁰, 1940, northeast of the Lake Ladoga. This was during a retreat period. We were migrants in Hankasalmi. My mother said that when she got to the cemetery, my father's body was already in the grave. She took the ladder and descended down the grave to pay her last respects. (Kainulainen 1998, p. 1343)

Marjatta Kainulainen organized the story according to the periods of migration, as she called them. In every phase, a home was lost and a new one was established, from the war up until the moment of telling the story. This sequential structure was repeated in several Karelian life stories, following the pattern of having to live one's life in the intervals determined by the evacuations, moving, and the war continuing. Finally came the time to build a permanent home; the unity of time and space could be reconstructed. In Marjatta Kainulainen's story, however, the succession of phases was reversed; instead of achieving a sense of stability, her being became defined as migration. Contrary to the usual descriptions of homes, in which a new home was a fulfilment of the dreams, in her story the new home was a poor copy of the original one. Some consolation was offered by the name of the street referring to a place in Karelia, which made her feel closer to home. She ended her text on a nostalgic note by quoting a few verses from a popular song on Karelia.⁶¹ This citation expressed

⁶⁰ I had marked, or else Marjatta Kainulainen had, that the father died on 1 October 1940, which is not possible. The date could be around February 1940, when the troops in the Ladoga Karelia were ordered to retreat.

⁶¹ Marjatta Kainulainen quoted a popular song by Aili Runne, the lyricist for several nostalgic songs on Karelia. These songs were especially popular in the fifties, and many of them are still well known. The best known of Aili Runne's songs is a waltz, '*Do you remember Monrepos?*' (1955). Monrepos was a famous park in Vyborg. The film director Aki Kaurismäki has the Salvation Army Flea Market Manageress sing this waltz in his film *The Man without a Past* (2002). The role is played by the same singer Annikki Tähti who made the waltz originally a hit (Muistatko Monrepos'n? 2002). The scene is shot in the backyard

longing for home in Karelia and it was consonant with the content of her story, as it highlighted the sense of prolonged physical and mental migration. Marjatta Kainulainen expressed home in her story as a concrete place, the house and yard only a hundred kilometres across the border from where she was living. Simultaneously, the meaning of home was extended to cover 'lost Karelia' through describing nostalgia in its most common appearance as 'homesickness', the longing for a lost place and time gone (Johannisson 2001, pp. 7–11).

Marjatta Kainulainen: Two years passed, and we were ordered again to escape from war. This started a long period of migration, which in my case feels like still continuing. I had just turned eight years when we had to leave. We were placed in Sonkajärvi in Northern Savolax, in the Sukeva village, near to the central prison. My mum said that we had to move there and accept the place, because it was an order. If we had not accepted the place offered for living in, we would have lost our right to get land. (Kainulainen 1998, p. 1345)

[In 1993 they had to give up the farm they had established after the second evacuation. MK connected their move to the new rules and regulations of the European Union. (Kainulainen 1998, p. 1347)]

Now we live in Suistamonkatu, where just the name makes me feel cosy. [Suistamo was a place in Karelia.]
This started our third period of migrancy. (Kainulainen 1998, p. 1347)

In my thoughts I often wander to Korpiselkä, the place that I left when I was eight. From where I live now in Ilomantsi it is a hundred kilometres to Korpiselkä.

“Then it would be always Christmas,
I would have happiness in my heart,
if I could get back home in Karelia.” (Kainulainen 1998, p. 1348)

Marjatta Kainulainen's nostalgic reminiscing about Karelia is correlated with the common cultural representation of it. In the Finnish context, the nostalgia attached to Karelia is often stated as a fact, even in recent analyses where the relationship with Karelia is otherwise reinterpreted (Lähtenmäki & Ruotsala 2007, pp. 239–241). This notion of Karelia-nostalgia involves not just the Karelians but also the 'nation',

of Helsinki in a Salvation Army concert and it is full of allusions to the past, irretrievable yet always present (Peden 2007).

with Karelia being regarded as ambivalently present in the construction of Finnishness. When Karelia is placed in the centre of these constructions, it is approached with nostalgia; when at the side, Karelia is dissolved from national consciousness by juxtaposing it with Russia, the 'arch enemy' of Finland (Komulainen & Gordon 2007, p. 175). In cases where the border appears more diffuse, and the former Finnish Karelia, and Russian Karelia that never was a part of Finland are represented side by side, this is most often through references to Karelianism inspired by trips to Russian Karelia (Haataja & Lintunen 1990, pp. 34–39). For Marjatta Kainulainen, the irrevocable presence of the border was above all of personal meaning: a hundred kilometres away across the border was the measure of her happiness. The nostalgic version of Karelia is said to include both presenting the place as the site of innocence, and also of pleasure for those who lived their early adulthood in the atmosphere of the city of Vyborg (Komulainen & Gordon 2007, p. 175). Marjatta Kainulainen had held onto her sense of deprivation, perhaps also of innocence, ever since she left the place at the age of eight.

Marjatta Kainulainen's story fitted the category of Karelia-nostalgia because of its ending and its overall tone. Regarding my research material in general, I had become hesitant about placing the war widow stories in this category of nostalgic representations of Karelia, a hesitation based on the material itself. I was not sure that the widows expressed nostalgia for Karelia to the extent that it was a qualifying trait in their stories. Marjatta Kainulainen had her focus in the past; and for her, longing to go back home was essentially the content of her relationship with Karelia: 'home in Karelia' was the ideal and ultimate goal. The widows I interviewed as well as the life story writers still kept their gaze on their present life and ahead, even when they described their life and homes in their past. The story of fleeing home was told, but after this was said, they did not compare their present lives with the time in Karelia. They did not discard their past, either. Home in Karelia was told about in a down to earth and practical manner, and Karelia was seldom idealised. For example, all of the women interviewed had visited their former homes and home places or what was left of them, these places were described in great detail, and the visits had been often emotionally charged. But simultaneously, the stress was on how the place

now belonged to another nation, and this pondering was combined with analysing war's effect on people's lives on both sides of the border. Their approach to Karelia was marked with presentness, rather than the past providing the defining orientation. Their former and their present homes were talked about together in the present tense, as was laughingly mentioned by Kyllikki Iloranta (2001, pp. 67–68). This intertwining of times did not appear to be a sign of prolonged dependency, but rather marked an easy relation to the former home place; home in Karelia was a happy and dear memory, caressed and held in value. Home was the concrete place that was left, that very concrete yard, which was, like the time there, the foundation for memory and identity. The self-evidence of the meaning of one's origin in a way diminished Karelia's presence in the stories. For this reason perhaps, the stories did not seem nostalgia-filled at first appearance. In the case of Impi Sinkkonen (1998, pp. 3405–3407), whose story was typed by her granddaughter, I could not help thinking that the granddaughter almost apologised that her grandmother had not said as much about Karelia as an evacuation story seemingly demanded. A comment placed after the text reads: "The writer is person from Metsäpirtti [a town on the Karelian Isthmus], she participates actively in the Karelia society of her present home county as well in different congregation events" (Sinkkonen 1998, p. 3497). It was difficult to say whether this was by the granddaughter or Impi Sinkkonen herself, but the note is equally interesting who ever wrote it, for it emphasizes that such stories have to be 'properly Karelian'. Impi Sinkkonen's Karelia-related activities were brought out in a separate annex to the life story, not within the actual story itself, and the phrasing in the middle of the attribution is fascinating: "in her present home county". If it is by Impi Sinkkonen herself, it shows all her previous talk was made in the light of her origin. If the granddaughter added the note, she managed to produce a nostalgic end to her grandmother's life story, and perhaps thus marked something of her own needs for the story to be like this. The very final note on the page was in brackets, and it was made clear that the granddaughter-typist was the one commenting (Sinkkonen 1998, p. 3497): "(A remark from the typist: The language has been preserved as near to the original as possible, because the language carries elements from both the Karelian and the Ostrobothnian dialects. In speech my grandma's Karelianness comes through even more clearly) [bold type by the typist]."

Telling Karelia in relation to loss had been one of my original research interests. My first impression was that Karelia was told about with seemingly little nostalgia, but I was hesitant about this. Maybe telling Karelia was done in a combination of ways. It was told with pragmatism and realism, as well as with hints of nostalgia or something similar that could pierce through as sudden rays of reminiscences about the safety of home there, a birch wood at the shore, where to build a house, a warm lap to sit on. Often these reminiscences were evoked by my curiosity on the subject. In the beginning of the round of interviews, I may have even thought that it was polite to ask about Karelia. In the answers, the original family home and the project of the new home were often rather inseparable. In any case, none of the ways in which the widows talked quite matched the stereotype images of wistful and dreamy nostalgia about Karelia, and neither was the nostalgia expressed reactionary or distorting of the past (Loewenthal 1989, pp. 25–27). In looking for the right word to describe how the past was told, I came across ‘unsentimental’, which was how Svetlana Boym (2001, p. XV) described how the first generation immigrants often were. Karelians were immigrants in relation to the ‘local’, or, ‘foreigners in their own country’ (Raninen-Siiskonen 1999). In the light of the stories that the widows told, they needed to be unsentimental, if they wanted to achieve what they wanted. For their way of telling later about their lives, the word unsentimental did not sound right. They were accurate and affectionate, bold and proud, at the same time. In the Impi Sinkkonen excerpt above, without stressing the past injustice of having to flee one’s home, it was made perfectly clear with one little phrase, “in her present home county”, that her ever-lasting Karelianness was implied. Yet within her story, the focus was on the daily life lived, and not on reminiscing but on the mixture of all her experiences that kept her going.

Boym’s (2001, pp. XVIII, 41–42, 49) argues there are two types of nostalgia, the restorative and the reflective, as ways of giving meaning to longing. This seemed to offer a key to the difficulty of finding an accurate expression for the kind of nostalgia attached to Karelia in the stories of the Karelian war widows. Restorative nostalgia puts the emphasis on a trans-historical reconstruction of the lost home and national

past, while reflective nostalgia is more interested in the ambivalences of human longing, individual and cultural memory, and historical and individual time. It explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones. Reflective nostalgia can be ironic and humorous (Boym 2001, pp. 49–50), which was also how the relationship of the war widows to their Karelia could be described. Critical thinking and longing were not opposites (Pickering 1997, pp.207-8), nor was laughter exclusive of sorrow, and not only in relation to Karelia but also other past endeavours as well.

In the third-person Karelian war widow life stories which were written by daughters, yearning, sorrow and longing were coupled with hard work and diligence. Emotions were seldom presented in concrete examples, whereas work was described in detail. Similarly, Irja Kalliopää (1998, pp. 1516–1529) mentioned “sorrows and longing” along with work, when she wrote about her mother’s and her own life. Her father died while they were evacuated: “Just the two of us, my mother and I, arrived at our home that was spared from destruction. Our homecoming was sad: my father had died of a short-term disease just before we left” (Kalliopää 1998, p. 1521). Irja Kalliopää’s brother was in the army and her three sisters worked as lottas, her mother kept the farm and the eleven-year-old Irja helped her. She praised her mother’s attitude: “My Mother, with a capital letter, was the one who, in those circumstances, despite the sorrows and longing, nourished a positive attitude towards life” (Kalliopää 1998, p. 1521). In her description of life on the farm, something of the positive atmosphere was still present. Occasionally the two-women unit was ordered to take a war prisoner for their assistance. This prisoner had to be taken supervised to his camp both morning and evening, which her mother took care of, equipped with an ancient and bad gun. As an adult Irja Kalliopää contemplated how amusing this must have seemed to a trained soldier – and then sent her regards to Vladimir, the soldier in question (Kalliopää 1998, pp. 1522–1523).

At times, it seemed that nostalgia referred to something completely different from time or space. Describing their mothers’ unbelievable strength, courage, and skills in economic and social survival was something which realized at every turn the national

fiction of the tireless and strong Finnish woman, especially from the reverse side of this positive image: these women in question had no choice but to be strong in their lone woman position.⁶² In this context, the only fractures in the perfect project of managing and coping were yearning and longing, as the means for the mothers to show emotions. For the writers, these occasions were presented in positive light, longing equal to diligence. For the mothers, nostalgia and reflection were perhaps a valued breathing space. Kyllikki Iloranta, my second interviewee, wanted me to have some of her family photographs a couple of years after the first interview, and I went to collect them. I had my tape recorder with me and we ended up talking with each other for about four hours. When her second husband came in, he participated in the discussion for a while as well. She told me she remembered sitting down in a chair in the evenings when the children were small and just looking at the photos, remembering her first husband and thinking of how it could have been, crying a little also (KI 2004, pp. 20–25). Silja Kilpeläinen (1998, p. 1601) described how her widowed mother both “yearned and worked a lot”. She did not return to the issue of her mother yearning after stating it. The children could sense sorrow and mourning, but what they saw was work, and everyday life: “When the Winter War broke out, my mother was evacuated. (...) We were staying in an outbuilding when we received the news. My father died 06.03.1940 in the Kollaa battle. Receiving the news was hard on my mother, who became a 35-year-old widow, in a strange place, without husband, with four children” (Kilpeläinen 1998, p. 1601–1602). Her mother-in-law and a sister-in-law were also her responsibility. The family of seven returned later to Karelia, and lived first in a room attached to a sauna, then a house built through the compensation program for the families of the dead soldiers. As an adult, Sirpa Kilpeläinen could see the amount of work this must have taken her mother: “A child remembers life as quite nice, but for my mother it was hard work. Well it did not last long, when the war broke out again. That was it, we packed our belongings again and had to leave. This time we could take some things with us, which was not possible the first time” (Kilpeläinen 1998, p. 1602).

⁶² The discussion of the strong Finnish woman as a national fiction (Koivunen 2003) has been referred to earlier in this study (Peltonen 1998; Markkola 2002).

Anna Kuismanen never stopped longing for her beautiful Karelia, according to how her daughter, Helmi Kuismanen, started the life story of her mother, after which she concentrated on describing her mother's endless work for the family (Kuismanen 1998, pp. 1828–1837). Anna Kuismanen had to deal with her sorrow through work, since there was no time to concentrate on mourning. Only at the end did Helmi Kuismanen return to the imagery of having to leave and becoming evacuated and the tumult it had caused, once the final 'homecoming' was solved for her mother. Anna Kuismanen was widowed when everything seemed to be somewhat in order. In 1947, her family moved to a cold farm where there were no buildings, but her husband died just before their sons got a house built for them after the migration years: "Years-long evacuation broke down my father's health and he could not move into our new worldly home. (...) My mother could not start worrying about her widowhood, diligent labour for getting life back to normal did the morning work for her. Our life returned to normal, like the best times in Home-Karelia [with cattle, chicken, kitchen garden and good neighbours]. (...) My mother Anna Kuismanen was a positive example of a Karelian woman, always working, a tough survivor, unselfish pillar for the family [she also became a mother figure for her son's children in her old age]. In the hundredth Easter week of her life, as she had always longed for, she was laid to rest in piece in the land where she did not need to leave for evacuation anymore" (Kuismanen 1998, pp. 1833–1837).

The collective reading on Karelia was well-known to the widows in this research. They had read their books on Karelia, all belonged to the Karelian clubs and certainly knew how to be 'a Karelian'. The questions about Karelia were answered diligently and with good practise. Similarly Karelia was mentioned in the life stories, even when it did not attract the largest chunks of writing. Yet the widows simultaneously managed to resist the image of nostalgic and weeping Karelians. They had lost their homes and land, their partner, income and social stability when they fled from war. This was what they told in a pragmatic and analytic manner. Their nostalgia, reflective by nature, had nothing to do with nostalgia as "a sadness without an object, as sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience" (Stewart 2001, p. 22). When they

were asked to tell about their lives as war widows, they did this from the point of view they had, as a single parent and sole caretaker of a family. This was their lived experience and position when interviewed, when asked to write their life stories or when filling in their pension application. They had an object for their desire and activity, which was to have a home and arrange their living. This showed as the priority in all the three bodies of material I have worked on. In this regard, even the geographical background was of less meaning than the focus on the future home. This same notion prevailed through all the materials. At some stage when reading the pension files, I understood that I had stopped paying attention to the origin of the one applying. Their background was mentioned only in passing a couple of times, and then it was attached to having lost all the furniture and household goods when the home had to be left. Furthermore, as I wrote in my Archive Work Book (Loipponen 2005–2006, p. 1): “In the archive the meaning of Karelia disappears. When the applications are in the piles, it makes no sense to sort out these piles according to who is from Karelia. The piles are already randomly chosen, it is useless to add to randomness.”

For the war widows, the problem was affording and maintaining a home in general, with one person in charge of supporting the family. This reading of the material correlates with some other single mother studies.⁶³ Emma Head (2004, p. 2.1, 2.2, 3.1), for instance, describes how the lone mothers that she interviewed took up the issue of home beyond the original research question; establishing a home and maintaining it was the first touchstone of single parenthood. Vanessa May (2001, p. pp. 266–267) interviewed Finnish lone mothers and commented that the older narrators, women who were grown-ups or adolescents during WW2, focussed on the material aspects attached to lone motherhood. May (2001, p. 267) connects this to the poor agrarian background of these women and how they were used to talking about managing under dire circumstances. In my study too, the women concerned had an agrarian background (similarly to the majority of the nation at the time), but I think that more than anything else the reason for them talking about practical matters

⁶³ In most western countries, single parenthood is still a major cause of women’s economic problems and in Finland poverty rate among lone mothers has kept increasing (Hakovirta 2006, p. 33).

was the pressing issue of economy in their lives as widowed women. This was not just because of their economic losses, but because their goals were set high: a house of one's own, a farm of one's own, a proper job and a good education for the children. This too was exactly a part of their agrarian heritage as women used to supporting themselves (Apo 1999, p. 23), and obviously much influenced by the general atmosphere of a war-torn society struggling for better material conditions.

This focus on establishing and maintaining a home as a common concern for all the war widows is not to deny the fact that the people who left Karelia were especially burdened because of their status as homeless war refugees, nor that they longed for Karelia. However, it allows space for thinking about what was perhaps essential about 'losing Karelia' and 'longing for Karelia'. Freud (1957), p. 243) compares and differentiates between mourning and melancholia: "Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on. In some people the same influences produce melancholia instead of mourning and we consequently suspect them of pathological disposition." He explains how melancholia can be a reaction to the loss of a loved object, or else the object has not died, but had been lost as an object of love. Melancholia is marked with an ambivalence, it contains "something more than normal mourning" (Freud 1957, pp. 245, 256). Normal mourning overcomes the loss of the object, when "each single one of the memories and situations of expectancy which demonstrate the libido's attachment to the lost object is met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists: and the ego, confronted as it were with the question whether it shall share this faith, is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished" (Freud 1957, p. 235).

Dominick LaCapra (1999, pp. 713–717) acknowledges Freud's idea of mourning and melancholia, and further presents mourning as a form of working-through, and melancholia as a form of acting-out. Working-through and acting-out are for LaCapra interrelated modes of responding to loss or historical trauma (his article

begins with references to the Holocaust and to the work of the South-African Truth and Reconciliation Commission). LaCapra (1999, pp. 698–702, 712, also LaCapra 2001) warns against conflating loss and absence and he locates loss on a historical level and absence on a transhistorical level. Losses are situated in the historical past, they are specific and involve particular events; they can be narrated. Historical losses call for mourning, and they can be worked through, at least in part. Absence is transhistorical and does not imply the tenses, past, present and future. It is not an event, it is structurally embedded: the absence of ultimate metaphysical foundations. Loss means that one loses what one had, and absence cannot compare since one cannot lose what one never had (LaCapra 1999, p. 701). By paying attention to loss and absence as individual concepts, LaCapra criticizes seeing loss and absence as cause and effect. If absence is converted into loss, or loss into absences, or encrypted, as he writes in brackets, the end result is an impasse: “When absence is converted into loss, one increases the likelihood of misplaced nostalgia or utopian politics in quest of a new totality or fully unified community. When loss is converted into (or encrypted in an indiscriminately generalized rhetoric of) absence, one faces the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia in which any process of working through the past and its historical losses is foreclosed or prematurely aborted” (LaCapra 1999, p. 698).

LaCapra shows that loss and absence have differing qualities, and simultaneously he reminds that problematic distinctions are too complex to reduce to simple binaries; loss and absence are separate but they interact (LaCapra 1999, pp. 699–700). However, his aim in pointing out the difference between the two is to bring forth how easily the distinction elides. This shows in the tendency to avoid addressing historical problems, including losses, in sufficiently specific terms, or to “enshroud, perhaps even to etherealize, them in a generalized discourse of absence” (LaCapra 1999, p. 700). It is possible that loss of land belongs to this category of generalized discourse of absence, since mourning for land may be regarded as a sign for a state of incomplete mourning and thus placed in the category of ‘absence and melancholia’, (Johnson 2003, pp. 293–294), which could explain something of why the Karelians mourning for their loss of land appears not always fully recognised as mourning for

loss. Freud's (1957) [1917] concepts of mourning and melancholia, as well as LaCapra's presentation of loss as working-through and absence as acting-out, seem consonant with Boym's (2001) presentation of reflective and restorative nostalgia. Mourning, working-through and reflective nostalgia could also be used to describe the prevailing impression of the war widow stories in this research, bearing in mind that these are complex and many-faceted concepts which are also connected to each other in various ways. Drawing on these three concepts, the focus needs to switch from the 'absence of Karelia' to a more comprehensible and practical unit of telling, home. This was the level of experience that had to do with the practicalities of everyday, as it was presented in the life stories. Karelia was a part of telling home, not the goal of telling. Home was told in three versions, as the concrete lost home, the project new home, and the larger mental surrounding of 'home in Karelia'. Consequently, telling home is comprised of at least two layers. The first layer is 'telling loss', which includes the loss of a concrete home and the building of a new one. The second layer is 'telling absence', which includes reflecting on the meaning of Karelia, as well as nostalgia-Karelia. "(...) what is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both", as Edward Said (2001, p 185) economically comments.

In the cultural discourse about Karelia, this concrete layer of losing a home in Karelia has perhaps been less discussed than longing for Karelia. Said (2001, p. 174) looks at the deprivation of home from the point of view of exile. He finds a possibility for a distorted view, for example in literature, if attention does not stay on the fact that exile tears people from the nourishment of tradition, family and geography. In reviewing a book on the Karelian industrial area of Enso (before the wars called Finland's Ruhr, because of its many factories), Lauri Hinkkanen (2006) praised the book as an opening to look at the past, at what was experienced and lived through, via work and doing: "Let the cuckoo call and the Karelian pasties be baked, they have been promoted enough and have become clichés." A cuckoo calling in the Karelian forests in a particularly unforgettable way and the Karelian pasties baked on Saturdays by the evacuated Karelians are among the best known – and most ridiculed – emblems for Karelia and 'Karelian longing'. However, in a recent book on the

Finnish national symbols (Halonen & Aro 2005), a photograph of the Karelian pasties is placed next to the contents page, as the second image in the book; the first is a photograph of an athlete, and on the cover there is a scene from the *Kalevala* painted by Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1986), both of these images being rather masculine and fierce compared with homemade savoury foodstuff on a white porcelain plate (this plate was most likely produced by the Arabia porcelain factory, representing tradition in Finnish form and design). Simultaneously, this choice of photographs places right in the middle of these selected national symbols the work done by the evacuated Karelian women and also work done in the homes and it shifts the focus to this kind of everyday 'work and doing'. In my research material, baking these pasties is named as a part of weekly routines and also from the point of view of acculturation, as for example when Kyllikki Iloranta mentioned baking a freezer full of these rice-filled rye-dough pasties for her Swedish son-in-law every time she visits her daughter's family in Sweden. This story of loss of home, settling, daily chores and work for a new one was at the heart of the war widow stories in the interviews, and in the life stories and pension application letters, as well. Impi Sinkkonen (1998, p. 3407) reflected on her life from the point of view of continuous work for the future:

Next summer we built a cowshed, a sauna, a hay shed, a wood shed, and a storehouse. So in that manner things started to be under control. The auntie [mother-in-law's sister] stayed with us all the time, so she was at home with the boys, and I could go to work and support the family. Also the boys got bigger and went to school and we started to manage. Then in 1955 a school was built here next to us, and I was employed as a cleaner there. It was good when work was so near, and the boys also started to do things. My mother-in-law moved to our place and I took care of her, after I had first minded Auntie till she died. (...)

This life has been so many-sided for each and every one. There are joys and there are sorrows. I worked as a cleaner in the school for 27 years, retired when I was 63. It was the best time when I could go to work and the job was just in the neighbourhood. (...) (Sinkkonen 1998, p. 3407)

War's Times

My communication with the Finnish State Treasury started with an e-mail letter I sent there (Loipponen 2004). I asked if it was possible to read the war widows' assistance pension applications in order to acquire knowledge about how the war widows told of their lives in this official context, and I explained that I had already interviewed war widows and read their life stories. I stressed that the focus was on the 'how' of telling and not in 'revelations' about people's private concerns. I also commented that I understood that my inquiry was about official papers containing sensitive data and that the papers would be dealt with anonymously. In the reply, I was notified that the data on the war widows included such issues as health and economy and this kind of information was secret until after fifty years after the death of the person in question. A researcher could gain access to the data if it was obvious that the research was not going to harm those who were protected under the law. My plan was favourably received but more information was required about how I was going to secure the privacy of people (Lehtinen & Taskinen 2004, p. 3). Altogether, the process of asking for permission to research in the State Treasury took eight months and included correspondence, phone calls, a meeting, as well as applying for permission from the Data Protection Ombudsman to set up a scientific register of my research data, with the details of this procedure presented earlier while introducing the materials.

As the State Treasury is a closed state authority, a visitor card was provided for each visit separately. After this procedure in the reception, an official in the Insurance division was phoned to come and take me from the downstairs lobby to the Insurance department and to the room that was pointed out as my working space. Once inside the official side of the building, it was possible to move around only by using a key card, with limited access from my room to the cafeteria floor at the top of the building. Already with my first visit in the State Treasury, the pension application files were ready in the room, and they stayed in a cupboard there until the end of my visits in June the following year. An official in the Insurance division had pulled out

the files as a random intake of the applications that had arrived during each of the three wars.

The files were arranged in piles. Each pile was marked with a yellow post-it-note. The information on these notes was clear: the researcher, the data, the war, the quantity of files. The piles were arranged according to the three wars.

Researcher 16/5 -05 The Winter War, 15 pcs [pieces]

Researcher 16/5 -05 The Continuation War, 12 pcs

Researcher, 16/5 -05, Lapland War, 5 pcs

Each such pile of war consisted of pink-coloured faded paper folders. I started reading from the 'beginning', and took the first file from the Winter War pile. This was the first time I had held a widow's pension application file in my hands. Since I could not understand every detail of the notation, I proceeded line by line and took notes very carefully in order to be able to ask afterwards about things I wanted to know. I still kept in mind that I could not copy everything, according to the agreement on secrecy that I had made. Square brackets were used for comments, for things I thought I grasped or for matters that needed further explaining. I copied as many details as seemed suitable, without any names, specific numbers, or any information through which the writer could be recognized. None of the original names were entered in my own archive notes; I changed them on the spot or used the figure 'Xx' to mark a person's name. I did not include in the information I wrote the gender of a child or children. The death date of a person or the battle in which he had died I did not change, since I did not think I had the right to intrude upon these matters.

The writing on the cover of the folder was a mixture of both printed writing and hand-writing. For example, after the Accident no. (as it was marked) there was a Roman numeral 'I' printed, and next to it one more such numeral added by hand. I wondered about this combination but remembered to ask about the matter later: it was there to mark that the person in question had died (Leppänen 2006). I also paid

attention to how the first two numbers of the year in the accident number were printed, with the second part for the exact year left to be filled in by hand. The accident number was followed by the name of the soldier, Niilo Selonen here. His birth year was also partly printed, again with the two first numbers visible: '19'. This notion of everything that had been possible to print being ready on the paper and the rest being added by hand gave me a sudden start; was there a blank form like this ready for each conscripted soldier, with a place in time waiting to be filled in with the exact year of birth and of death.

Half way down the paper there was a blue stamp, War Accident. Under it yet another name was added, this time handwritten with black ink. The line started with 'Velj.', and, when the surname was the same as on the name above, my first immediate impression was verified. 'Velj.' means 'broth.', a brother; a brother of the conscript had died and his name was added on the cover of this folder, as well.

ACCIDENT BUREAU	[the name prior to the State Treasury]
CONSCRIPT'S ACCIDENT OR ILLNESS [deletion by the authorities]	
Accident No: I / xx / 1940	[the second Roman numeral and the insurance number added by hand; 40 added by hand]
Name of the soldier: Niilo Selonen	
Date of birth: xx/xx 19xx	[the xx parts filled in by hand]
War Accident	['sotatapaturma', a blue stamp]
Broth . Eero Selonen xx/46	[Broth. means brother, 'velj', added with black ink]
Accident N:o I / xx/1940	[one Roman I and the numbers added with a pencil]
V.T. No: xx	[small print of cataloguing numbers below the page]

Figure 6. War widow's assistance pension file cover

My reading was halted. Already with the cover of the first file I had learnt that a family had lost two sons, at least one woman was widowed, possible children had lost their fathers; two brothers and uncles were lost. These two men were meant to be among the grandfathers of my generation, the same as my grandfather, who died the same year in the same war as the soldier whose wife's pension applications were in the folder I was reading; this folder could have belonged to my grandmother. With luck, these two men as well as my grandfather could have been alive, or have passed away only a few years back. For the sake of comparison, the paternal grandmother of my children had just died at the respectable age of ninety-nine. Within a few moments of contemplating the story that was possible to imagine from the cover of this one pension file, the death of these two men and its cumulative influence on their families, a dense net of connected times and places, became formed and potentially traceable. Simultaneously, my earlier presented theoretical construction of 'narrative's long exposure' was shown in a new light. This model was originally constructed for the sake of including all the materials and showing how their cross-section would illuminate the time and themes they described from various angles. Individual stories did not disappear in this construction, but their connectedness contributed to the whole. However, it was also possible to reverse the angle back to the individual story and show a similar network of stories based on just one story. In consequence, the figure of narrative's long exposure would build up even more densely, with each individual story forming a network of connected stories and these networks constructing a web of all the interconnected stories.

The name of the applying widow was not on the cover page, and neither could it be found straight away on the first page of the first document in the folder. This paper was divided into four columns, each with a title: Notes; Measure; Quantity mk [Finnish mark]; Validated and date. Under the title Notes, the message was nearly undecodable for somebody not familiar with the marking system. It was mostly from letters that I understood that something had been sent to a local welfare office in 1989. In the Measures column, this was explained, again with shorthand, and by using just the first letters of some words, in what was not a very common manner.

However, the combinations of longer and shorter abbreviations were still understandable (in Finnish at least; shortening in English most likely will not produce the same effect, because certain words are very different in length, such as ‘copy’ – ‘jäljennös’: “Supplement.a.p. reject. dec. to the widow. Cop. to Kela. 21.8. KP” (File 1, 1940, p. 2). The meaning I read here is that a decision (dec.) was made, of a rejection (reject.) of a supplementary assistance pension application (a.p.). A copy to the Social Insurance Institution [Kela, the official shortening] was sent August 8. KP were the initials [changed from the original] which marked the officer who had written the note. The decision was validated on 12-09-1989, as it was written. Under this note, in the Measures column, the following was written: Sap – reject – dec. to the widow. Cop. to KELA. And this decision was validated on 4.12.02. Now only the initials of the supplementary (s) assistance (a) pension (p) were mentioned.

I have copied the notation here, in order to show how careful one had to be in trying to decode the message, in order not to miss the meaning when the information was this compressed. Furthermore, by reproducing or rather recapitulating the process, I am trying to share my unfolding sense of realizing what these two sentences were about after working on their meaning. This spare notation expanded and thickened in meaning after every new word was worked out. The first issue was the sudden change of time between the cover and the first page of the first document. In the space of turning from the cover of the folder to the first note of the first document in the pension file, there was a transition from the year 1940 to the years 1989 and 2002. The cover of the file cited a ‘war accident’, when the husband died in 1940. In 1946 the name of his brother was added on the cover. The well-thumbed physical appearance of the cover, with its faded colour and the old-style thin paper quality of the first document, was in accordance with the years on the cover. However, the first lines of information on the document were of recent events, written three years before I was reading the file. I was suddenly in the middle of the applicant’s contemporary life, in my own time. I felt like an intruder. There was no introductory phase, as there had been with the interviews and the life stories, with phoning, getting prepared, driving, getting a list of possible war widow stories, and then

shaking hands or reading at my own pace. I still did not know the first name of the applying widow, when I had learnt what had happened to her in her life very recently.

Furthermore, the length and continuation of the whole effort of widowhood was compressed in these first couple of lines describing the decisions from 1989 and 2002. This person, Mrs Selonon, spouse to Niilo Selonon, randomly picked out from all the applicants, had written applications to the State Treasury for sixty-two years. This realization was fortified by the sense of first reading about the death of the husband, then jumping right into a recent event in the life of the widow. When no development was shown between these two figures, the length of time became a raw, blunt statement. No explanation could have told in a more profound way what the matter was about. She had stayed in a financial relation to the state authority ever since her husband died. While this was a benefit for her and their possible children (there had not yet been any information on children), it also meant that for sixty-two years her life had been to this extent defined by the death of her husband. At least in this aspect she had lived with the consequences of war ever since the war. I had thought much about the length of war, of war's times, while interviewing and reading the life stories. This thought appeared again around how the pension document presented data concerning very recent years. Was the question perhaps about whether the widowed woman had ever felt that the war had ended, when she had to keep sending in those applications?

Despite of the reality of the sixty-two years of correspondence between an individual woman and the State Treasury, none of those years showed in figures when the file contents moved straight from the year 1940 to 2002. A peculiar double-effect was the result. While the passage of the years was thrown in one's face, simultaneously these sixty-two years disappeared and there was no distance between 'then', the war, and 'now'. The husband died then, in 1940; his wife lived with the consequences now, in 2002. When war was shown from its consequences onwards, the time gap between the beginning of the war and now vanished. The result was the same as in

the previous paragraph when pondering the length of time between 2002 and 1939. War's end became questionable.

I continued turning around the document in my hands in order to understand its logic and it became apparent that I had started reading from the 'wrong end'. The paper was slightly bigger than an A3-size sheet folded. These four pages had been arranged so that the last page with the two entries from 1989 and 2002 was on the top. In reality this was the second page, and thus the first page of the document was turned facing inside to the page which I had read first. The paper was of thin quality and handling it was correspondingly slow, which was one of the reasons why I did not turn to the first page right away. The other reason was my eagerness to start to read the files; I paid no attention to how the document was folded at first. In consequence, I had read the two final comments on the whole document in the order of them having been applied, first the entry from 1989, then 2002. When I realized what had happened, I felt a need to explain why I had not checked more carefully, and wrote down in my pension application work book how I had first thought that the document was only about the supplementary pension applications (Work Book 2005–2006, p. 2). Instead, it turned out to cover all the official entries regarding the decisions made concerning of applying for a pension or its increase. This was a normal procedure, the existence of which I did not know then, and I was further distracted by the folding of the document. Later an official working in the Insurance Department told me that this first document in the pension file was called 'the white cover' (Leppänen 2006), to describe how it was filled in with information. Furthermore, new empty lines were arranged ready for the following entry by folding the paper with the last page upwards. This was practical when handling the files and looking for information.

The 'order of war' was returned to 'normal', once I had located the beginning of the process. I was also finally about to get to know the name of the person applying for money. However, the first piece of information was about the husband in his role as a soldier. War accident and the accident number were quoted again; and now with even a full-stop already added to the sentence where this number and the year were.

Name, birth year, military service time and military refresher course time had been filled in. Rank, promotions and how much money this meant were likewise added, and the compensation class and daily allowance were cited. Status could be chosen from single or with a family, and in his case, wife was underlined, and children, with the number '1' added for one child, after which the name of the wife and the child were added. After having renamed the soldier as Niilo Selonen, the pseudonym used following my agreement with the State Treasury about anonymity, the wife became Lahja Selonen. Now I knew whom I was talking about. After this, his military unit was named, then the focus returned to the widow, and her address in Vyborg was mentioned. The list of the documents that were required as attachments was printed ready; these included the actual application, register certificate, medical certificate, an extract from the husband's military card, accident announcement, legal record, health certificate of the soldier. The papers that had arrived were crossed through. The last document in the list was added by typing. It was a certificate that the person applying was without means.

After this, the four-column system started, which was known to me from the reverse side of the paper. The first application had arrived in January 1940 after Niilo Selonen had died in the battle of Voimäki on 6 December 1939. Measure: Shall be compensated for. Next Measure: New war widow's assistance pension decision 9/1 - 41 [New a-pensiondcn, as it was written]. This decision was marked in the pension card 24/3 -41. A new pension card was established 21/4 -41. From the year 1942, there was a note saying that the widow had been accounted for due to the time before the law for war accidents was inaugurated. In 1953, two entries were made, from 27/5 and 28/7, both with the same title: Supplementary assistance pension for the widow. These were validated on the card, dated 13/8 1953. All such entries of validation were marked carefully by drawing a pencil line from the decision that the entry was about. After these entries, the first page was full, and turning to the second page meant returning to the beginning of the reading process. It was time to move on to the pile of papers that were included in the file. There were so many of them that I established a number system. The first all-inclusive document was number one. All separate papers got their own number; if there were several attached together, they

shared a number. This first file had eighteen separate papers, some of which were comprised by two to four separate papers. I ended up taking notes for ten pages, with single-line spacing. My first working day in the State Treasury was spent reading the Lahja Selonen pension file; although I did not know this when I started, taking notes on official decisions and reading handwritten notes was very time consuming.

After the folded sheet, a new document was added to the file. In my own notes I wrote: “new and white, all the other papers are yellowed” (Loipponen 2004–2005, p. 3). This second paper of the file turned out to be an application for supplementary assistance pension from 2002. The document referred to the Military Injuries Act 1948 (28.5.1948). The date of the decision made, the accident number, the name of the dead and his social security number, the name of the one person applying and her social security number, were added. The decision: Discarded. This is what I already knew, but not the reason for discarding. Now it was made clear. Reason for discarding: Clearance on the economic standing of the applicant.

Attached there was the application written either by Lahja Selonen, or else typed by her representative after dictation. I was quite nervous about not including any sensitive material concerning the finances or health of the person in question, not to mention any names, and I left out some of the financial figures and marked these places with ‘xx’. With hindsight, I can say that it would have been sensible to keep more of the figures, since without those details the message in the letters in regard to the financial claims were unclear. Besides, I left out things rather randomly when I was looking for the best way to take notes. These were applications for the betterment of the economic status of the widowed woman and/or her children, hence this was the focus in the letters. My notes are combination of various strategies, as I was both trying to avoid and to include, without a clear vision of what mattered most. In the next excerpt, for example, I have left out the monthly costs, but included the income, and I cannot exactly say why. I also want to point out that in the newer applications the former Finnish monetary unit, the Finnish mark, could still be in use besides the Euro. Often the income was in FIM, expenses in euros, and this is the way the units were used in Lahja Selonen’s application. How much confusion this

change from Finnish mark to euro in 2001 caused and how much it influenced the sense of having less income remains a question concerning Lahja Selonen. She wrote:

I live in the Service Foundation service home for the aged, where my rent plus electricity are xx euros per month. I pay every month to the Domestic Service Center for help xx euros. For cleaning I pay xx euros per month. Sauna payment is xx euros month. My pension goes nearly altogether to make these payments. My savings dwindle all the time. My State Treasury pension is 2832 Fm/month. Kela [The Social Insurance Institution of Finland] 1398, 00 Fm/month. Work pension 1680 Fm/month. [Altogether 985 euros per month.] Per year I use about 920 euros on medicine. TV-licence, phone, newspaper, they cost too. They are stimulating for my life, thus necessary. I therefore apply for a supplementary assistance pension. (Selonen File 1, p. 3)

The document ended with the name, signature, postal address and telephone number of the applicant. The reverse side had information on the supplementary pension. Another two-page paper was stapled to the document, the clarification on the applicant's financial means. The document was drawn up for listing all the income and expenses that a person applying could have. These included salary or unemployment money per month net; earnings from agriculture per applicant or estate; net pension payments according to the social insurance legislation (per each part of the pension): national pension, care allowance, housing allowance. Lahja Selonen had filled in where she could. An official had added in pencil next to these figures the total sum of these: 346,46 euros netto. Other net pensions per month divided by the payers was the next part, also requiring a document if one had the pension for retired farmers. Lahja Selonen had a pension from the State Treasury and a work pension from an insurance company. Also listed was any other possible income, of which she had 2,200 Finnish mark per month, and an official had marked with a pencil that this was made 31 euros per month. Lahja Selonen had no real property or shares. Savings deposits were asked for, and she had given an estimate. This had been corrected with a pencil to a slightly higher figure, and an official had added a note saying that the limit for deposits was 14,295 euros, and that Lahja Selonen had a bit more in her bank account. I wondered if Lahja Selonen knew that her bank account could be checked. In any case, referring to her bank account meant

that this process of monitoring her life had occurred to such an extent every time she had sent in an application.

Listing Lahja Selonen's financial status continued on the reverse side of the paper. She had no loans, she had no shares of loans of an estate. She said she was living alone, and quoted her rent and her housing allowance. She explained how much she paid per month for domestic help and for cleaning, and added to her medical expenses the doctor and laboratory costs, which were asked to be clarified, as well as journeys to the doctor, which added up to 1,500 Finnish marks per month, and again by pencil this was corrected to 252,80 euros. In the extra explanations, she added that there were some hospital stays, for example in 2001 for two weeks.

The next paper in the pile was the third separate one in the file, and it had one paper attached to it. This was the decision to reject Lahja Selonen's application in 1989. The reason for this was a clearance made of the income of the widow. The application was short and precise (Selonen File 1, p. 5): "I apply respectfully that I should be granted a supplementary assistance pension to secure a reasonable standard of living according to the Military Injuries Act after my above mentioned husband fell in the war". Additionally, there was a hand-written note on a piece of square-ruled paper, written by Lahja Selonen herself. Her style was convincing but there were some spelling and grammar errors, such as the word order not being conventional. These little uncertainties showed that she was perhaps not too used to expressing herself in writing (unfortunately, I am not competent enough to show all these nuances in the translation). She wrote:

I apply respectfully for a supplementary assistance pension because I bought a small house in 1959 located on a council plot. With a high-interest loan now the city will sell this plot at 23,925 Finnish mark. When I buy this I will have to take a bank loan again. The rent is already over a 1000 mark a year, on top of all the other compulsory expenses. In 1988 the cost for sickness was 6,394 mark. I would be very grateful if I got a supplementary assistance pension.

Greetings, Lahja Selonen

The Place, The Local Subdivision of the Society for the Families of the Deceased. (Selonen File 1, p. 5)

This letter from Lahja Selonen showed that my intuition that personal letters were attached to the pension applications was right, at least in this case. I do not think I can express vividly enough the excitement that I felt in the office in the State Treasury. As in the first interview with Bertta Kaukinen when she suddenly named my grandmother, I felt that I was completely on the right track, if such an expression can ever be used of research work, where continuous exploration better names the effort. Lahja Selonen had decided to try to influence the process herself, which was a perspective on war widowhood that had become rather obvious from the very beginning. These were women who had to ability to think ahead and who tried hard in every possible way to make their lives better. Attached to the application there was again a clearance paper on the financial status of Lahja Selonen. This paper was addressed to the social services office in Lahja Selonen's local community. Her income, costs, loans, pension, assets, living costs and such were checked. The last thing Lahja Selonen had added was that she lived with her son who did not contribute towards his living expenses. An official had underlined with a wavy pencil line the part "does not"; I also calculated that the son was then fifty-one years of age.

The fourth separate paper was a hand-written note from 1943:

I want to know if my pension money has been sent, when before the money for three months came the first day of the first month and now I have not yet received I really need the money badly Yours sincerely,
Mrs

Lahja Selonen

Vyborg

Quarter

Street, street number
(Selonen File 1, p. 6)

Lahja Selonen had sent her application from Vyborg, which meant that she had moved back there after the first evacuation. Simultaneously I realized that I could only guess that she was 'back', as I had been so careful at the start that I had left out her address from the first document. Again, this was something that I did not pay enough attention to while working on the pension papers and understood only when analysing my notes that it was not necessary to leave out the place that someone was

living in. Such information does not harm the person in question and excluding the varied places during and after the war made invisible that the people concerned had to adapt to changes of address on top of trying to secure a living for their families.

I was still reading from the end towards the beginning, and the fifth paper of the letters was a decision on a war widow's' assistance pension application in 1941, with her child also being granted a pension. It was notified that she was entitled to this pension for as long as she lived. If she were to remarry, she was entitled to a three years [this was two years initially, but later increased to three] war widow's pension sum at one go. Her child received his pension until the age of seventeen. The sixth paper was a small piece of squared paper with the names of the widow and the child plus their personal details; this appeared to be a paper used elsewhere in the state system. The seventh paper was a decision from 1953 to grant a supplementary pension for the widow, because her opportunities to support herself and her child had deteriorated, because she had fallen ill. This decision was valid for nearly a year. The eighth paper was a bank slip, with an attached pension power of attorney, and also a covering letter to the bank to check if the pension allowance had arrived because it had not been credited to the bank account of the applicant. The ninth paper consisted of four separate ones. The first of these was a typed letter signed by Lahja Selonen herself, concerning a doctor's statement which was attached, saying she could not work and absolutely needed the extra money:

With a reference to the attached doctor's statement, in which it is cleared that the person in question is unable to do salaried work and therefore applies respectfully to be allowed the highest possible supplementary pension according to the Military Injuries Act, because my survival based on only the assistance pension is impossible and because my sickness causes me high extra costs. (Selonen File 1, p. 7)

The doctor had added a short slip in hand-writing: "The respectable widow Mrs Selonen has been seeing me because of xx illness since February 12. This care has caused her extra costs. I hereby affirm the need for the patient to be able to apply for extra income" (Doctor File 1, p. 8). Also the envelope of this letter exchange was

saved in the file. On a new page, there was a letter from the social secretary of the local social welfare office (Social secretary File 1, p. 8):

24/4/1953

- 1) She does have a salaried work.
- 2) She has a son who goes to school and lives with her.
- 3) She is not really sick, but perhaps a little sickly.
- 4) a) She does not own anything. She lives in her brother's house, where she cooks her food, according to how she feels. She has obtained her own share of the house earlier and has most likely supported herself with that money.
b) She does not own any property.
c) Nothing else except some share of the house.
- 5) When the applicant does not have a steady income, it would be most desirable for her to have a supplementary pension.

These answers were understandable without the questions, but my way of reading proceeded according to how the file was arranged, and the questions were found on the reverse side of the paper. The fifth question was the most demanding concerning the professional ability of the official answering on behalf of the social services: "Does the person reporting agree that the applicant, considering that together with her family she gets about 7,400 Finnish mark per month as normal assistance pension, cannot survive without the supplementary one?" This official thought that Lahja Selonen needed the income (Social secretary File 1, p. 8), and as commented earlier, she also received a supplementary assistance pension for seven months in 1953–1954. As I came to realize, the first thing I had read when starting to read her file was that she tried again in 1989 and 2002, but without succeeding.

The tenth paper in the file was a piece of white paper with just names on it; it seemed a covering letter. The eleventh paper was the decision to pay the sum that Lahja Selonen was missing from the time before the Military Injuries Act in 1941. This decision was also familiar to me from the entries in the official traffic between the State Treasury and the applicant. The twelfth paper was a letter handwritten by Lahja Selonen to inform the State Treasury about her return from where she had been evacuated to her old address in Vyborg, dated 26/11 -41:

I am kindly asking to inform You that I have returned from the evacuation journey so my address is again xx. Because I am being paid a pension from the State when my husband Niilo Selonen died in a ~~battle~~ Defence war 1939. (Selonen File 1, p. 8)

In her note she had first written 'battle' when she referred to her husband's death, then crossed it out several times and used instead 'Defence war'. 'Battle' was the term in the official papers that she had received after his death, when she was informed that he died in the Voimäki battle. I was left wondering about her choice and think that perhaps she wanted more stress on war for the sake of reminding the authorities of her being dependent on the state allowance. Her next letter, according to the order of the pension file, but written before the previous one, showed her choice of the term 'defence war' in the light of the development of national politics and war. This thirteenth paper in the file was dated 29/6 -41, marked sent 4/7 -41:

I have been paid a pension since My husband fell in war 6/12 1939.
This is to let you know my address when I have been evacuated and I
am not in the same locality as before. Please send the money for living
[elinkirahat] to where I am now. My address now is
Street Address
City

(Selonen File 1, pp. 8–9)

The Continuation War had started on 25 June 1941. By November, Lahja Selonen had been able to move back to her home in Karelia, and it could have been in this elevated spirit that she referred to 'defence war'. Now the war effort was finally fully rewarded. Her husband had not died in 'any battle' but in this special war for his country. While writing the earlier letter, she was still homeless and just named the date on which her husband had died. The terms of peace had been harsh and difficult to accept. War propaganda had successfully promoted the term defence war during the Winter War, and the famous spirit of Winter War was built on this thought; it was a huge disappointment to realize that the expectations may have been too high concerning the ability of the country to defend herself (Soikkanen 1999, pp. 235–246). However, these possible nuances were a side-effect. The basic meaning of the letters was to announce a change of address, which was a normal procedure and such letters were attached to several pension letters. The authorities could not keep up

with the pace of people moving continuously during the war, which those dependent on the state assistance income soon realized.

The fourteenth paper in the file was a covering letter from the headquarters of the regiment where Niilo Selonon had served sent to the State Treasury. Attached to this letter were four papers. The first was the application from Lahja Selonon for her pension and for a funeral allowance. Following the usual order of the file, the decision should have come first. Nonetheless, I kept reading. The application was for the most part a form, which was filled in by crossing out options and adding in some parts in writing. In the application it was made clear that Lahja Selonon and her child had been dependent on the income of Niilo Selonon. A certificate from the local parish was included, to prove the dates of the birth and death of Niilo Selonon, and the birth dates of Lahja Selonon and their child. Also attached was an official statement from the local regiment headquarters of having received an announcement of the death of Niilo Selonon. And in the fourth paper of this, the local government in the area of the Selonon family farm attested to Niilo Selonon coming from a farm which was shared by his widowed mother and her ten children, which made Lahja Selonon's part of the farm miniscule. Therefore the chairman on behalf of the local government suggested that Lahja Selonon needed assistance for herself and for her child. The fifteenth separate paper was a quarter piece of paper sent from the State Treasury to the local government, announcing that it had been decided that "In the battle of Voimäki on 6 December 1939 fallen reservist soldier Niilo Selonon's widow Lahja Selonon and the child Xx Selonon were to have assistance pension of 3,600 Finnish marks per year starting from 7 December 1939" (State Treasury Official 1, File 1, p. 8). The sixteenth paper was the State Treasury decision on the burial assistance, and the seventeenth paper was a notice from the regiment to the State Treasury on a fallen soldier, Niilo Selonon.

The eighteenth and the final paper in the file was the decision from the State Treasury sent to the widow and the child on granting an assistance pension. The full pension would have been 4.800 Finnish marks, of which they got a "¾ assistance pension", as it was expressed in the letter:

The State Treasury Decision on the upcoming matter, concerning assistance pension. Given in Tarvaala 22 January 1940.

Deceased: res. Soldier Niilo Selonen.

In the matter of assistance pension concerning the above mentioned, fallen doing his military service 6 December 1939 in the battle of Voimäki, the State Treasury has resolved the case so that the surviving spouse Lahja Selonen and the child Xx Selonen are allowed an assistance pension from 7 December 1939 in the compensation class 1, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the full pension quantity 4.800 Finnish marks, thus 3.600 Finnish marks per year, which is 900 Finnish marks in a quarter year.

This now allowed assistance pension is paid to the widow throughout her life and to the child until 17 years of age. However, if the widow remarries, the assistance pension will cease and she will be then entitled to have a sum equivalent of two years of assistance pension.

The State Treasury has given a separate decision on the funeral allowance. [A handwritten note in the middle of the text.]

An appeal against the decision can be sought from the Insurance Council with a complaint letter, to which this decision has to be attached.

(State Treasury official 2, File 1, p. 10)

With the last document in the pension file, the official narrative of Lahja Selonen's war widowhood had reached the beginning according to the temporally backwards arrangement of the file. Since 7 December 1939, Lahja Selonen received a war widow's assistance pension from the State Treasury. At the end of my working day in a State Treasury office I wrote in my pension applications work book (Loipponen 2005–2006, p. 1): "Suddenly a day has passed, a day that became Lahja's day." This was exactly my feeling. I had not spent a day flipping through anonymous archived pension files. I had got to know something of the life of Lahja Selonen, at least in relation to the official aspects of her war widowhood. The communication between Lahja Selonen and the State Treasury was based on law and regulated procedures, yet even within this realm of official papers, some of the information was of more personal nature. For her normal pension, the basic information concerning her life was needed, but for the three times when she applied for a supplementary assistance

pension she had to submit quite a bit more information about her life: how she lived, what she earned and why she needed the money. Once she had attached a handwritten personal letter to stress the need for an extra pension. The last time she applied, the costs of living were listed in such a way that her old-age life style was described. In addition, shorter or longer descriptions of her life by other authorities were included in the file as well, such as the social welfare, since the local authorities had a duty to report on her financial situation. Due to the combination of official and personal information, her pension file was a combination of genres which together formed a life story, or a fragment of a life story at least.

It can be asked if the contents of this life story quite match the definition given by Ken Plummer (2001, p. 19), that the life story is a personal document, an account of a person's personal life in his or her own terms. It is impossible to say if Lahja Selonen felt she could freely choose what to write and how to write it, or if instead she felt compelled to tell about her life in a very particular way in order to reach her goal of a supplementary pension. However, all stories of a life are performed within some frame, in a 'war widow interview', in a writing competition, or in an effort to respond to the needs of an official system. This aspect of practise in telling one's life was a strong impression I gained from reading the pension files. The death of a husband started a long process of involvement with the authorities, and it appeared that many widows developed a lot as writers in such exchanges. The women I interviewed had also talked to me about the occasions when they had demanded their rights, for example, concerning buying the land they wanted. At the time I just had not understood how much paperwork all these changes in their lives necessitated. In the pension application letters, emotions too were expressed, mostly anger and frustration if something had gone wrong, but also gratitude on occasion as well.

In parallel with finding that these personal materials were an element in the pension files, I realized that all the precautions concerning the protection of private matters had been necessary. At times, it even felt upsetting to be reading the files. The people concerned could feel desperate about their situation, which made them give rather detailed information about their lives. However, this was still them telling about their

own matters with their own voice, whereas to read the thorough reports sent by social welfare officials, doctors, school headmasters and such, felt at times very uncomfortable. I probably had access to some information that the widowed women had not seen themselves. As a whole, it seemed that when the word of a private person went against the weight of the system, the situation appeared hopeless although in some cases very complex. Fortunately, in most of these situations, the women in question turned out to be resourceful and often managed to defend their rights. Even when they did not succeed, their tone was self-assured; they had a right and they were entitled to the benefits, since it was their husbands who had died for their country. There were also situations when a State Treasury official helpfully tried to explain the situation to a widow in a way beyond their authority position. All this added to the sense of a state official archive being quite private by nature.

In some cases it was difficult, at least for an outsider, to understand why a pension application was not allowed. In such situations, it was often exactly those things that made either the relationship with the dead soldier special or else it was some matter that had defined the woman ever since she was widowed, and the question was about existence and the value of a woman. These women were dependent on a system which they had ended up with no ability to influence. The day after reading Lahja Selonen's pension file, I started with a file where Ilmi Kakko had applied for a pension in 1973. Until this, she had supported herself and her five children as a factory cleaner, but due to her many illnesses she was unable to continue in that job. She had been married a second time, but her husband had died by 1958. According to the assistance pension system, the right to a war widow's pension could be returned after a new marriage ended, but she had not pursued this right before 1973. She was denied her pension, when the State Treasury had received information that she was "not without adequate income" (Kakko, File 2, p. 12). She appealed to the Insurance Court: "I am a sick person and live in straitened circumstances in a very cold and ill-maintained apartment, where there are no modern conveniences. Living is expensive in every way already due to the cost of heating. I wonder very much about the rejection based on a falsely given account. A person at this age cannot any more live the way said to receive a rejection on these grounds" [I think she meant that when

she was sixty-one but sick she could not support herself the way the rejection suggested] (Kakko, File 2, p. 11– 12). The court ordered a pension to be paid to her.

In the same file, concerning the family of the deceased soldier in question, the eighth paper was again a rejection, this time concerning his mother who had been rejected a pension in 1954. His mother had applied for a pension on the grounds that she had been supported by her son. This process began in 1949, after she had first felt in good enough health to support herself after her son was killed on 8 December 1939 (Mother, File 2, p. 13). Several people were involved in the process. A local chairman of the Society for the Families of the Deceased had written a long letter in 1954 on behalf of the mother. He made it clear that he thought that the mother had lost too much already and felt herself to be judged as a bad mother when she was not compensated for her losses: “She lost in the rebellion war [Civil War 1918] her husband and in The Winter War her youngest son. (...) She mourns over being a bad mother when she has not been good enough to be compensated for her losses” (Chairman, File 2, p. 13). There were several rejections before this final round. In 1946, a lawyer had sent a letter to the State Treasury concerning the application of the mother. Once the mother had written a short note and asked for her case to be checked once more: “I am already so old that I will not have to ask long for anybody’s mercy here, but as a nuisance to everybody I do not seem to be taken away either” (Mother, File 2, p. 13). A doctor had included a health certificate where it was proven that the mother suffered from a heart disease and high blood pressure (Doctor, File 2, p. 14). The State Treasury had approached the local police chief to inquire if the mother had lived with any of her children and if they had supported her. He had answered twice, in 1949 and in 1946; in his 1949 answer he wrote that he thought that she could still support herself (Police chief, File 2, p. 15).

In the fourth file that I read, the situation too was that of a mother applying for a pension after her son was killed, but this time the reason for a rejection was that the mother, Maria Parikka, was judged as not the mother of the dead soldier, but the step-mother (Parikka, File 4, p. 17). In this case her daughter-in-law, who did get the assistance pension for herself and her children, wrote to the State Treasury to inquire

about the matter. At that stage she did not know the reason for the delay with the decision, and wanted to expedite the case or provide the State Treasury with more information. She expressed her genuine worry for the standard of living of her mother-in-law: "In my opinion she [mother-in-law] should be entitled to an assistance pension, since when my husband was alive, he assisted his mother monthly with the sum of 400:- or 500:- per month. But now this seventy-three-year-old, sick, ailing old woman lives as a migrant in her daughter's place in X City. They cannot get an apartment of their own, there are many families living together in the same apartment, and they are also otherwise almost without means" [her mother-in-law and her sister-in-law] (Daughter-in-law, File 4, p. 18). She also included a stamp for a return letter. I cannot imagine how it felt to the mother to be told that she was not the mother of her child after having lost this child in the war. Eventually, the decision was corrected in March 1943, after the process was started in December 1940. The mother sent a note in April 1942 saying that she was content with the decision and did not have anything to complain about it, as well as a change of address. She had been able to return to Vyborg. In September 1943 her daughter sent her death certificate to the State Treasury.

Some of the writers expressed sarcasm in their letters (File 6, p. 22): "With the best of intentions I would like to inquire the reason for not having got the pension that I have been allowed and that I have now been waiting for for nearly two months. I am namely only a worker and do not live on any private means so I would like my money to be sent in the first place. My child cannot survive without food and only the child matters." Some writers were very angry, as the woman who had not been able to marry her fiancé due to the wartime circumstances and who was thus denied a pension. She had a testimony from his regiment to say that he had applied twice for a permission to get married but had not been allowed leave, even though the couple had published their banns (File 13, p. 27), with this letter from the regiment sergeant-major included. After a struggle, her child got a pension, but even so the mother did not think they could manage on it. She was furious and wrote personal letters, saying that she hoped that these unofficial letters would be taken into account; in the next excerpt two letters (20.9.1941 and 20.2.1942) are shortened and combined, as they

included certain same expressions: “It is impossible for me to manage with this little child without a provider and a home. I can’t either go to work, because of taking care of the baby. Why are the orphans who lost their guardians so little cared for in this country? I think that it is all wrong that I did not get a pension, when it was because of war that we could not get married. Because of this I will have to suffer for the rest of my life and live with my child in misery without a home” (File 13, p. 28). She was eventually allowed a pension in 1945, when the law had been changed. In 2003, she was allowed a supplementary pension at the age of eighty-nine. Her child wrote the application letter and stressed how his mother had many illnesses but was sprightly in appearance and wanted to stay at home (File 13, p. 24). She could not manage without help, which the local authorities did not seem to provide, and she had to buy private services, which she did not really have enough money for. The child lived four hundred kilometres away. In this one pension file, there was an overview on family matters from when the child was just born until the mother was eighty-nine years old. I wondered if they had told to each other this same story about the young fiancé never making it to his own wedding and the consequent matters, or how she would have told this story in an interview. I remembered how calm but straight Bertta Kaukinen had been when telling me that she was not allowed a war widow position. People seemed a lot angrier in their letters than when they talked; but then, these were different people, as well. Despite the early struggles with the State Treasury, the mother and also the son continued to be dependent on them. When the child studied, he was allowed a prolonged pension, and later, as mentioned above, it was his turn to speak for his mother, which he successfully did, too.

In all the files, the direction of reading was from the latest events back to the beginning, which was due to the practical arrangement of the files. Once I had understood what the order was for, I wanted to continue reading in this order, in order not to disturb the contents of the files, which included every little possible piece of covering letter and envelope. Furthermore, it made analytical sense to read in this order. Even though in the process of interviewing and reading the life stories, the beginning of war and the evacuation were the starting points, the effect and focus was the same on all these occasions: the war. In the pension files, the arrangement

made the reader pay attention to the consequences of war. In the interviews and life stories, the causes were told first. When interviewing, I approached the war widows for the purpose of them telling me about their lives in post-war Finland. This is what they did, too, but only after first having told me about the evacuation and war in general. Starting with the wartime events had felt like being pulled close to war and simultaneously the war being flung in my face; there was no post-war without the war being told first. With the pension applications, the order was reversed, when war's effects always came first. Yet the matter stayed the same: war was the focus. In the interviews, as well as in the Karelian life stories, war led to changes, such as people becoming exiled. These changes were told in their order of occurrence, and they were taken care of. In the pension files, war was named on the cover, after which the focus moved right away onto the consequences of war. These consequences were the first thing in the document in Lahja Selonen's case: supplementary pension applications and their rejection in 1989 and 2002. I have discussed the presence of war's consequences when interpreting the materials before, as well as of the blurred times between presenting home then and now. After having read only a few lines of the first pension file of a war widow, I could say the same thing and add that the consequences of war were the pension file, indeed.

Moreover, starting to read from the 'end', and in Lahja Selonen's file this was the year 2002, was an efficient reminder of wars not ending by the official historical date that is declared to be the ending date. The Winter War started on 30 November 1939. Her husband Niilo Selonen died six days later, December, in the battle of Voimäki, and the war ended officially on 13 March 1940. Lahja Selonen was still applying for money sixty-two years after her husband had died. The acute consequences of war were not bound to official dates, but to managing with the everyday, and this everyday was every single day ever since the war started. Lahja Selonen did not accumulate in life. Her sole property was a house that she had bought in 1959, forty-eight square metres of living space, another thirty-two square metres upstairs. Later in life she moved to live in a service home for the aged. She could buy the services that she needed, and she had a wee bit of savings, plus 14,295 euros precisely, but still at the age of eighty-five she was not totally comfortable with her financial

situation and was worried about her savings getting less. The impression was that she had always had to think of money, even when taking into account that in her communications with the State Treasury finances had to be stressed. It is possible that life would have been this impecunious for her even if her husband had not died in the war, but it is also possible that she might have been more affluent. I remembered how Kyllikki Iloranta, my second interviewee, glanced around her comfortable living room and said that she had always wanted to have her home nicely done and have books around but she never really had the money to do it. She added that now when there was a bit more, she had learnt to be too careful to spend it.

Koselleck et al write that duration can only be seen through repetition (Koselleck, Narr, Palonen 2000, p. 27). The way the war widows' pension files were arranged from the last event backward to the first emphasized duration, even when the logic of this arrangement was created by chance, as a means to facilitate working with the files. What was a good arrangement for an official in the Insurance department, was a reality for a war widow: the consequences of war could be traced back year after year in the form of financial support. The duration of war was realized in individual lives. The concepts of event and structure are also useful in this context, with Koselleck (2004, pp. 108–109) distinguishing between events which are caused or suffered by specific subjects, and structures as supra-individual and intersubjective. Events and structures are separate but related, and they can merge: concrete individual events gain structural expressiveness within the framework of a long period. The practicalities of the filing system managed to show something essential about war. Because the filing ran backward from the last bit of information to the first, from today's perspective to the early war years, it became impossible to say lightly that the war was 60 years ago. War was the event that was last written into the file of any individual war widow. War's time was not a time in-between the beginning date and the ending date of war, but a continued, prolonged, sequential, and a processual time of the consequences of war.

Koselleck (2004, pp. 1-2) also suggests that an expression of historical time in everyday life is made through the successive generations in a family, where different spaces of experience overlap (space of experience) and perspectives of future intersect (horizon of expectation), inclusive of all the conflicts with which they are invested. Similarly, the pension files of war widows articulated historical time in everyday life, as they are comprised of the successive and parallel lives of members of families and the effects of war on those lives. Due to the conjunctions, layers, coexistence, connectedness, hierarchy, successiveness, inclusiveness, of experiences, there can be no one historical time, Koselleck (2004, p. 2) continues, but rather many forms of time are superimposed one upon the other: “There are therefore (to be precise and audacious) at any one time in the Universe infinitely many times.” Neither is ‘war’ one time, if ‘war’ is interpreted through how historical experience was expressed in the war widows’ pension files, as well as in the interviews with war widows and their life stories. War’s times were all the times, as well as their effects and meanings, included in the 300,000 documents related to wars in the Insurance archive, the number of which is still increasing (Taskinen 2005, 2006). War is war’s times and their living out, by the Karelian war widows, among others.

The perspective of war’s times takes into consideration both the duration and the repetition that wars manifest. Hanna-Liisa Hämäläinen (1998, pp. 1174–1175) wrote in the Karelian women’s life stories collection about her mother and started her story with her mother being born in Vyborg a hundred and ten years before she was writing about her (in 1998):

“We had just celebrated her fiftieth birthday and life seemed to be at its best, when the Winter War broke out. Everything that we had built up in life vanished in a moment. (...) My mother was 30 years of age when the Reds and the Whites fought in Vyborg and the front razed over her home yard. (...) Finally it became more peaceful. (...) Nobody wanted to talk about the old times anymore, we were only planning ahead. Twenty years of peace – and then everything collapsed again.”

Concluding Thoughts

In this concluding section of 'Women's War Archives' I draw together what I understand as my approach to the archival sources that are part of my research, the Karelian life stories collections in the Folklore Archive of the Finnish Literature Society and the war widows' assistance pension files in the State Treasury. These textual sources of research materials have been read in parallel and are entwined with the war widow interviews, and many of the questions that have been posed to exploring these texts encompass my study as a whole.

This chapter began by exploring through the concept of 'archigraphics' (Stanley 2005) the practises of approaching and interpreting the written Karelian life stories, and in particular the life story of Tyyne Koli. This was necessary since it turned out that I had been reading her life story as a war widow story, which it was not. Archigraphics introduces 'the noise of labour', composed by the acts and processes of researching and writing that are usually elided, deleted, and covered over as a result of the rule of 'silence in the archive' (Stanley 2005, pp. 7–9). My conclusion here was that I had counterposed 'then' and 'now', 'there' and 'here', and also 'war' and 'peace', as I had adopted the attitude of the archive to collect, restore and also arrange the past (Fritzsche 2005, pp. 16–18); this 'retrieval of the past' equating with the power of operating closures over the past.

Stanley (2005, p. 16–17) writes how researchers select traces from the past, already archived, classified and catalogued, with their contextual meanings flattened and their ontological status changed, in order to reclassify them for their particular research purposes, thereby again changing their ontological status. These selected traces of the past then become "the documents in the case" (Stanley 2005, p. 17). In my study this gradual process of metamorphosing led to a noticeable mistake, and thus to tracing the path that led to this incorrect interpretation. Furthermore, as I became aware 'by mistake' of such metamorphosing, that it actually happens instead of just throwing in the usual Bergman and Luckmann (1996) reference to 'constructed truths and realities', I also became more aware of the possibility of

mistakes that I had not noticed. And, since my whole research was about people telling their experiences in one form or another, I had to ask myself again, as I had repeatedly asked during the process of writing my thesis, what my ethical stance was in regard to these people who shared their stories with me, either with or without their explicit consent. If I could tell a story based on what I wanted to hear rather than what was told, then I was not listening. Thus my version of archigraphics came to mean an awareness of ‘the presence of error’ in a more complex sense than this error being a technical mistake (which might not be ‘just’ technical, as my ‘mistake’ in reading Tyyne Koli’s story shows). By admitting the presence of error, I mean a quality that I hold valuable for research in general and feminist sociological research in particular, which is exactly the fact that any research is a compilation of the selected traces for one particular purpose, in which process there exists the possibility of a researcher making a mistake. This is a positive quality, not a negative one, since acknowledging fallibility means that a study is not a ‘closed creation’ but an ongoing survey of what has happened and what is happening in our society, as well as ‘a sociology of knowledge’. For this, an open and detailed discussion around understanding the choices which a researcher has made is needed, since expertise can be successfully claimed only when readers accept the basis for this. By assisting readers to become co-readers of the material which is gathered, a researcher can also say that a research topic is approached ethically.

Concerning the two archives together, my main discovery in doing this work was to understand how deeply the war was embedded in these texts, although neither of them was collected as ‘official archives of war’. A massive archive of personal collections of war, such as letter collections, wartime diaries and other such material exists, but these two archival sources were not constructed of ‘war stories’, and they have never been acknowledged as ‘war archives’, although their content is about war and particularly about war’s effects on people’s lives, with their subjects being departing home forcefully, the evacuation journeys, building a new home from a scratch, not once but repeatedly, working, cultivating fields, and raising children. Antoinette Burton (2003, p. 4) asks if private memories of home can function as evidence of political history, and the same can be asked of my research material,

where a lot of this is centred upon home. The answer can be found in the stories themselves: they are vernacular presentations of the aftermath and consequences of the war. They are political and they are counter-history in the sense that they contest the view of acknowledged war archives consisting of war stories which have ‘war’ as the named subject. This characterises the war widow interviews too, for the interviewees ignored the notion of ‘postwar stories’ by telling their war stories about the continuing consequences of war in their lives.

Silence in the archive can be dense when it is compared with the relative – and it is only relative – openness of an interview. In an interview, a dialogue can be seen, it is written openly in the transcription, and although this is only part of the research situation, at the least the reader has a chance to participate in the interpretation of these materials. For example, in this research it is possible for readers to see how the interviewees participated, shaped and contested what was happening and expressed their own strong views, and to compare this with my interpretations. In an archive, the dialogue remains hidden unless an effort is made to show it, which is what archigraphics provides a tool for. It would be easy for the researcher to remain silent, go about one’s business and draw ‘the conclusions’, but the basis for this work can be laid open. This also means that the researcher has to strive for this dialogue with the archival sources to take place. The core question is the ethics of understanding. If those who are speaking through the archival sources are considered as ‘material’, as I first did with Tyne Koli, it means that I did not treat them as persons telling their stories, stories which I want to pass on, wanting to remember the one who told this particular story. Remembering as the basis for understanding is intertwined with mourning, not in the sense of thinking that a person is dead, but in the sense of imagining this person alive or indeed ‘existing’. I have been drawing on Ricoeur’s (2004, pp. 131–132) idea of “close relations that count for me from the viewpoint of shared memory” and Schütz’s (1972, p. 163) notion of a “We-relationship”, “another person as within reach of my direct experience when he shares with me a community of space and a community of time”. Derrida (1996, pp. 172, 192) names the interrelationship between the silence and absence of the dead and remembering them as a “dynamis”, an economy of exchanges which recurs and recurs (Stanley 2002, p.

3). In a fundamental sense, archigraphics is such a dynamis and it involves an ongoing dialogue with the archival materials and also a series of questions concerning my research ethics. Understanding requires nothing less.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

Communities of Memory

“Social reality is not external to she who experiences, makes, or observes it. Conceive of it this way: people bring into being for one another a ‘structure’ (I use this term metaphorically here) which they inhabit temporarily and which drops away behind them; of course it is not made any way we want; what we put together in the past shapes the direction and framework of the future; what we build interlocks with what others build; we build what we know how to build with the materials that come to hand. None the less, we move into the future as into a building, the walls, floors, and roof of which we put together with one another as we go into it. It is an ongoing creation of and in *action*” (Smith 1990b, p. 5).

Walter Benjamin (1999, pp. 90–91) writes in ‘The Storyteller’ [1936] that storytelling is the art of repeating stories, but that this art is lost because no weaving and spinning goes on while the stories are being listened to. Previously, the milieu and rhythm of this work was foregrounded for the person listening and the resulting state of self-forgetfulness made it possible to learn the stories in order to retell them. There are many obstacles which precede retelling a story, as I have indicated in the previous chapter, but at least the sound and rhythm of weaving has been heard as part of the background to my study, and the traces of this followed my childhood, with my grandmother weaving rag rugs, wall rugs, linen sheets and table clothes in the back parlour of her house, my childhood home. In my study, one of the metaphors for my work is the memory of my grandmother’s ‘ryijy’, wall rug, and the metaphor of weaving a wall rug alludes to the parallel processes of remembering and writing. By bringing together Karelian women talking about their lives from the viewpoint of their widowhood, with the story of my grandmother and my own memories, the result is a ‘text rug’. It is a ‘text rug’ which has been produced as a co-production between the widows and the researcher, and being surrounded and infused by this set

of encounters means that it is located in relation to the social world. This concluding chapter focuses on the pattern that has emerged as a result of this complex process.

Benjamin (1999, pp. 97–98) continues by citing Pascal writing that ‘No one dies so poor that he does not leave something behind’, and Benjamin adds here that, “Surely it is the same with memories too – although these do not always find an heir.” I take this position of being an heir to receiving memories seriously. My research subject has been loss and its consequences as these have been told by people who have experienced major changes because of wars; and if I had to choose one particular story to describe how loss and its consequences were told by the war widows in my study, then I would pick this from what was told during Kyllikki Iloranta’s interview. There was no doubt about her having had to work hard all her life to get even the basic necessities together, yet at every stage she had managed to hold onto a sense of moving forward despite the obstacles she faced. Her positive attitude to her workload and to the difficulties she had had to face in her life was impressive. After she was evacuated for the second time, she stayed with her mother and child in her son’s house. When he got married, she wanted to move into a place of her own, and take her mother with her, but he resisted this idea because of wondering how she would manage.

This is included in my discussion of the research encounter with Kyllikki Iloranta, but her remarks did not stand out in the way they had in the interview - Kyllikki had been certain she would succeed and had conveyed this with just three words. It is possible to express things in this way in a synthetic language like Finnish, but this is almost impossible to translate into an analytic language such as English, at least in such a way as to preserve the sense of sharpness, authority and finality of her decision, and also the sense of optimism, courage, determination, leadership. She said: “Mie pien hirstalkoot. / I will invite people to come and work with the logs so as to be able to build a house” (KI 2001, p. 39). The sense of plunging into an almost impossible project comes through in the English, but not the rest. In saying these three words, she was referring to the tradition of people, especially in the countryside and small towns, voluntarily working for each other in the fields and in building

projects. As the first step to building a house, she needed logs, and so she arranged for this to take place. She did not see a problem but instead a solution, which is why I was so impressed with what she told about this.

In emphasising this example, I do not mean to diminish the weight of hard work, economic trouble, changed plans, grief and longing that the widowed women so clearly expressed in the interviews with me and also in other sources, and indeed these qualities were essential to Kyllikki Iloranta's story as well. The stress, however, is on the fact that the tellings that these women wanted to share with me in the interviews and the ones that I read in the two archives were told by proud and courageous women; and next to the sorrow and mourning they expressed, the content of their tellings was also concerned with hope and continuation. This combination of loss and work and hope with loss told with a bold edge was such that it called forth remembering, retaining and retelling. Undertaking the work of memory regarding these war widows' stories was not just about a researcher's enquiry, but concerned the chain of generations in passing on tellings and stories that are relevant and interesting and important for the community.

Liisa Malkki (1997, p. 91) has described accidental communities of memory, a term which does not refer to a local or national community, or even to a social or historical generation, but "rather to a less explicit and often more biographical, microhistorical, unevenly emerging sense of accidental sharings of memory and transitory experience". These communities of memory were formed of people who, for example, had experienced war together, whether as civilians or as combatants; these historical occurrences had brought together people who might not have met "in the ordinary course of their lives" (Malkki 1997, pp. 91–92). People who have experienced such things together have something in common – something that deposits in them traces that can have a peculiar resistance to appropriation by others who were not there. These momentary, out-of-the-ordinary periods of shared history can produce (more or less silent) communities of memory that do not correspond to any ethnologically recognizable community and they may not even be articulated as communities, not even by those who were 'there'. Those 'who were there' usually

get drawn back into other, more publicly acknowledged, collectivities such as families and nations and are normalized ‘back where they belong’. The widows of war heroes – “the widows of the nation” (Salmi 1986) – become normalized as widows or single women, even as beneficiaries. In the face of these other, recognized, nameable communities, the communities of memory that form through accidents of life and hazards of history can be subterranean, traces that remain but which are easily disembodied (Malkki 1997, p. 92).

My study is concerned with telling about their lives by some individual war widows. Out of the total of over 30,000 Finnish World War Two war widows, most of them recognized as such by the state. But in addition to belonging to this ‘official category’, they also formed an accidental community of memory, people who shared such experiences of a period of time that nobody else shared, and this also shows-up in their tellings. As a concrete example of this, some of the incidents which occurred are repeated in more than one telling, one of these being how Bertta Kaukinen’s fiancé was drowned on his way to spend his leave with her. This was told about by both Bertta Kaukinen herself and Eeva-Liisa Rötö, my last interviewee, two women who had not known each other in a face-to-face way, and their telling is one trace of the things that happened to the community of war widows. In a different way, our research encounters also formed an accidental (but related) community of memory, and at times I was included as more than a researcher, as for example when Bertta Kaukinen started to look for a photograph of my grandmother that she knew she had somewhere in her albums, and when I was asked questions about my background as a third generation Karelian evacuee, and when I could understand something of I was told or read because I could contextualize it due to my own family history.

Communities of memory may be transitory, but the transitory is not necessarily weak or fleeting in its effects, as is the case with this ‘community of war widows’. These war widow tellings provide valid interpretations of Finnish society during and after the war, up to the present day. The importance of these accidental, war-brought, shared experiences is not only that people carry traces of them in their heads, nor it is ‘just’ a matter of memory. They leave material traces and they enjoy afterlives.

These are also not just biographical afterlives, but are structural, social and political, with this 'culture' being transmitted by telling it from generation to generation (Malkki 1997, pp. 92–93). These memories, narrativized and retold, can powerfully shape what comes after. "Who one is, what one's principles, loyalties, desires, longings, and beliefs are – all this can sometimes be powerfully formed and transformed in transitory circumstances shared by persons who might be strangers", Malkki (1997, p. 92) writes; drawing on this, it seems to me that certain qualities in the war widow accounts could be due to transitory as well as long-lasting circumstances that shaped the lives of particularly the Karelian war widows. I base this on the war widow stories included in my research, and on my family experience of being a part of 'women's communities and women's houses' that came into being due to the war and still existed in my childhood in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as also encountering these matron-led households and communities during the long period of fieldwork for my research. This brought with it for these women a distinct quality of presence and authority, explicitness and also an ability to reflect, look back and look forward at the same time.

Morwenna Griffiths (1995, pp. 13–54) explores sharing temporal and spatial location and 'learning from experience', including from others. Griffiths (1995, pp. 178–179) sees 'webs' of inter-connections as individual creations by particular makers and also context related, where the temporal and social context gives meaning to the web. As she notes, 'being me' means creating a self as well as living within the patterns of 'a particular time and place'. By the metaphor of web, she refers to artefacts of hand, woven products, tapestry and such: weavers and needlewomen create objects according to existing patterns, which is how and why these creations are contextual, and yet within that given context and structure there is variation due to the creativity of the one in charge of creation. And by using the 'web' as her central metaphor, Griffiths (1995, pp. 178–179) also accesses concepts related to constructing identity, particularly those of 'becoming' and 'agency', comparing these 'webs' and their contextual creation to selves which are always in a process of becoming: one becomes oneself, a real complex self, gradually, through changes and differing contexts (Griffiths (1995, p. 173). Furthermore, 'a self has agency'. Making a web is

a creation of individual talent within the time and space of creation, and the same thing applies regarding selves: to become a self, or 'being me', is a creation by as well as of oneself which takes place in the society and time wherein one lives.

Being a war widow was a part of 'being me' for the women in my study, at least for the interviewees and the war widows' assistance pension applicants. The Karelian life stories were not collected as war widow stories, but some of them were accounts of widows' lives. Uniqueness and contingency characterised these written life stories as well as the war widow stories. A part of this construction or self-representation involved coping with loss. But how does a person cope with loss and how does a person tell this; what is it that I have found? I have engaged thoroughly with war widows' stories, but I have not pursued nor have I regarded it as possible to provide a global general theorization of loss, because losing is always specific, located in time and space and involving particular people. My conclusion is that the emphasis needs to be on how lives are told. Nolen-Hoeksema and Larson (1999, pp. 2–4) interviewed people who mostly had lost a loved one to a terminal illness, and they discerned in people's adjustments to loss there were phases of grief. This research included a woman who had lost two husbands, both naval pilots, both having been killed when the woman was in her twenties. She did not consciously experience grief until her fifties, when something triggered the grief she had not at the time experienced. Regarding this extended time between the losses and her experience of grief, she had commented that, "I had children to raise, things to do" (Nolen-Hoeksema & Larson 1999, p. 7). I do not know what would have counted in this case as an 'acute expression of grief'; however, in the war widows and text materials such expressions were present, for example when a mother wrote or spoke of not being able to breast-feed a child due to grief and fear. However, this overriding concentration on taking care of what was the most essential was found in my research materials too. Sorrow and mourning for both homes and partners was a part of life, but the work still had to be done, the children raised and a home established, and their focus was on these. As Sylvi Ahola answered when I asked her if she was content with where she settled and if she had ever thought of looking for another place:

JL: Was this choice of place clear to you after you had settled here then, or did you ever think of leaving and looking around?

Sylvi Ahola: No, I did not. We had to move so many times and to so many places that I would not even have managed to think such things. I was just happy to get to one place and to be able to stay there. (SA 2001, pp. 70–74)

Translating Encounters with War Widows

How do I then represent the war widows that I have interviewed or whose written life stories I have read for my study, their losses and struggles, also their achievements and survival despite this? Bogusia Temple and Alys Young (2004, p. 175) pose this question as a general one for every researcher in all fields of research, as a concluding thought around their specific subject, which is translating. Those practical decisions that are taken while translating – and which also run through this thesis – are grounded in ontological and epistemological issues and have consequences for how particular research is produced and received (Temple & Young 2004, p. 175). Both of these issues, representing other people, and translating what they say or write, are of equal urgency for my study, especially when I do research regarding first-person accounts of people's own experience (Riessman 1993, p. 17).

However, although the question of translating between languages is obviously relevant for my study, as all my empirical material is in Finnish, I do not tackle the specifics of translating from the viewpoint of translation studies, but as a reflexive work that has led to my reinterpreting nearly every original key concept I started out with during my research process. If I began with a description of the difficulties, let alone all the many more complexities, in translating from Finnish to English, then this would require another thesis as a base for this one. I give here one example from among the many: all my interviewees, and also many of the writers whose work I have used, used the Karelian dialect, which is a very distinctive eastern dialect, and even just its rhythm gives a certain cast to speaking. Furthermore, my grandmother

spoke this dialect and it is embodied and ingrained in me, but I could not get one sentence in any English translation I made to sound in this familiar way, which was rather painful because it excludes nuance and subtlety of expression. This rhythm and style is not altogether easy to reproduce in a transcript in Finnish either, so that both the original transcripts and also the English translations of the ways the widows speak are a sum of many small but in total rather important compromises.

Translating has been taken as another point of departure for this thesis, another organising feature but one which is considerably more than a metaphor. Translating as a term, even beyond its use for linguistic and cultural transfers, expresses the crux of research praxis, since it involves a process of choices made in relation to the intentions and preferences of the researcher.⁶⁴ It is an “ethics in practise” (Guillemin and Gillam 2004). This includes reflexive work at all levels of the process, including considerations of concepts, theory, positions, cultural readings and gender. In short, translating is understood here broadly as converting research encounters – with the interviewees and other related data, myself, the social world – into research writing that will enter the public domain, and thus, for its part, it becomes a part of ‘how things are’ but more importantly what I can claim to know. I am, of course, not suggesting that there are ‘pure’ materials which I then convert into interpreted data: life stories are already telling translations of lives lived, as told by the subjects themselves or by officials who write organisational documents, and so on.

In this thesis, I stress an epistemological position where I enclose myself as a researcher through analytical reflexivity within a shared ‘act of understanding’: how we come to understand and know what we do (Stanley 1990, pp. 3–4; Temple and Young 2004; Temple 2005, para. 5.3). This means analytically examining the relationship between the researched and the researcher, and a defensible understanding of what the researcher does to the research is the desired result. In this manner, the process of knowledge production becomes part of the product of inquiry (Stanley 1990, p. 4). Research praxis involves questions of location and power, and unless the basis for decision-making is disclosed in the sense of made available for

⁶⁴ An earlier version of my ideas about translating appears in Loipponen (2007b).

scrutiny, the production of knowledge remains ethically unfounded. Here I subscribe to feminist ethical principles of transparency and conscious intellectual commitment to self-reflection (see for example Stanley 1992, 1994; Järviluoma, Moisala, Vilkkio 2003, pp. 22–23).

Compared with translating, ‘understanding’ or ‘interpreting’ as concepts do not so clearly point up the fact that the information I receive or shape is not ‘objective’ and that it is influenced by me. In consequence, language and representation are regarded here as epistemological issues in need of thorough scrutiny. This is particularly suitable for my chosen topic, since the vocabulary and ideas attached to being a war widow already present a contested and challenging arena. All the concepts attached to becoming and being a war widow are ‘foreign’ for a woman of my age and location, but ‘ordinary’ for women who have had war as their immediate material, mental and physical landscape, either as members of the generation living through a war, or as members of one belonging to the second generation and in this sense ‘come from the war’.⁶⁵ This vocabulary includes words such as war, loss, escape, grief and survival, but saturated with particular meaning. My generation has been flooded with images of different wars, as violence everywhere, and are told about war on a daily basis – but we do so in a more removed way, away from pain; through our “camera-mediated knowledge of war” (Sontag 2003, p. 21), and also by meanings removed from the temporal, historical and other resonances of the 1930s, 40s, 50s...

When I started the interviews, I did not want to define war widowhood in advance but rather sought for the description of it as it was told by the interviewees. I gave no instruction to the widows about telling, other than what they had heard me say on the

⁶⁵ Marianna Hirsch (2002) identifies strongly with Eva Hoffman when she writes in *Lost in Translation* (1989, p. 23): “I come from the war; it’s my true origin.” “I too *come from the war*”, Hirsch acknowledges (2002, p. 219), “from that generation of the immediate postwar in Eastern Europe which grew up hearing stories of hiding, persecution, extermination, and miraculous survival every day and dreaming of them every night.” Initially, Hoffman (1989, p. 25) does not think she can derive anything from her parents’ experience, but then she hears a new story of what her parents went through during the war: “this – the pain of this – is where I come from, and that it’s useless to try to get away.” However, she continues later, those children who come from the war are perhaps overshadowed by their parents’ stories (Hoffman 1989, p. 230).

phone or what they had read in the newspaper or on a leaflet. I was also conscious of not having mentioned a specific date at which they should finish their story. As my primary goal was to understand loss and at least something of its consequences, the idea was to listen to the interviewees in order to capture how their losses were told. Yet, in reality, I was trying to set limits to what could be told before ever having heard these stories. In fact, I had an uneasy feeling that by asking for ‘post-war’ descriptions, I had not only used the term as a time-related reference without thoroughly thinking of what ‘after’ war might mean, I had also expected to hear certain kinds of tellings. Contrary to marking free narration, my specified ‘after’ identified a desire to hear structured and organized life stories that would fit well into neat categories and be easy to inscribe. I realized this, when, instead of what I had prefigured as ‘post-war’, I was told of war and its contemporary consequences in a way unwilling to be framed according to my preconceptions. All the more disquieting was the fact that my approach was not only a matter of inadequate conceptual preparation, but also of a questionable ethics towards how I conceived of people as tellers. Obviously, this had to be changed. The first shift was to replace the term ‘post-war’ with the concept of ‘war’s times’. ‘War’s times’ I still think better expresses how the interviewees and their ways of telling, as well as my other material, contributed to understanding of the consequences of war. ‘War’s times’ encapsulates the way that for an individual a war consists of many times, of different durations and intensities, as experienced and lived with and told and retold. As regards the act of telling in particular, ‘war’s times’ is a concept which calls attention to the way that every time war is told and remembered this repetition indexes the duration of war and its unfolding consequences (Koselleck 2004, pp. 108–11); and that telling in this way is the necessary condition for demonstrating its continuing duration.

The concept of ‘survival stories’ was something I discussed during the encounters I had with the interviewees. I had used it in the newspaper announcement I wrote in the sense of marking a practical attitude. I grew uncertain about the appropriateness of the idea, however, after reading about adverse reactions to ‘heroic’ survival stories (Peltonen 1993, pp. 67–70; Loipponen 2004, pp. 147–148). This further connects

with discussion of cultural representations of ‘the strong Finnish woman’. Pirjo Markkola asks if a female researcher of Finnish history is “doomed to repeat the mythic image of the strong Finnish woman” (Markkola 2002, p. 86). For my own part, this question has also to be posed regarding my matriarchal background. My two grandmothers were both widows, one was widowed in the war, the other soon after. There are no elderly men in our family photographs. Surrounded by young women, men and children, in the middle there is a woman, my grandma, clearly in charge. Indeed, as a consequence, I might have attached to the stories of widowhood, as well as to survival stories, the quality of the ‘heroic’, too. However, when negotiating the equivalent of a survival story with Bertta Kaukinen, she seemed to give no heroic connotation to the wording, indeed rather the opposite. For her survival was very much a daily activity, rooted in repeated becomings.

JL:

I have been thinking about this term survival story. (...) Would you call your story such or more as just building on life?

Bertta Kaukinen:

Well, after you have got a job, it has kind of saved you from all the trouble that there has been in-between. It has brought in new things to think about, (...), new people. [Then she continues to comment on an incident at work that at first she does not want to be taped, but continues anyhow.]

I got also attacked by a client who thought I had tempted her husband. He had just commented on my looks and this woman thought to herself that I had contributed. So, there were a lot of these kinds of twists and turns and bad things. (BK 2001, pp. 52–53)

After re-thinking these concepts of post-war and survival story, there was also the issue of Karelia itself to consider. The mythologized national story of Karelia and the story of the lost Karelia are overwhelming in many respects. Karelia as it is presented in the national epic the *Kalevala* and by the Karelia-enthusiasts called Karelianists has left its permanent mark in the imagination of the Finnish nation (see for example Sihvo 2003; Paavolainen 1982, pp. 123–124). Then, as if this were not enough, Karelia was lost. Also the northern part of Russian Karelia, in which the Karelianists had travelled, became melded into the image of one lost Karelia. Development of this

sentiment has been such that I do not think it an exaggeration to say that virtually nobody who is Finnish can disown the sense of something powerful in relation to Karelia (be it positive or negative). The grand narrative of Karelia is of particular concern to me, since, through my family background, I am a third generation Karelian, and this is how I have defined my position as a researcher in research contacts and in relation to my interviewees. At some stage in the research process, I found myself wondering if my relationship with and understanding of my interviewees might have been obstructed rather than facilitated by my Karelian roots. I realized that I in fact had, on many occasions, and in spite of my Karelian background, spoken and written about the interviewees as ‘Karelians’, as others, as if it were not one part of Finland that they were evacuated from. This raised powerful ontological issues. What was I? An insider or an outsider (Best 2003)?

In answering my question about how to translate the research encounters with understanding, I felt compelled to make conceptual changes in my research approach and I was also moved to think more thoroughly about my own position. I became more conscious of the ethical questions that exist when dealing with the telling of lives. The use of a dialogic approach motivated me to clarify methodological aspects, such as how I responded to incoming material in the context of my own background and existing understandings. I used the term ‘narrative co-production’ for this, in considering narratives as joint constructions (see for example Gergen 2004, p. 279), and combined this with my earlier ideas about participatory memory work. I had started to write about the concrete encounters that were my interviews, and while doing this I became more fully aware of the interviewer and interviewee relationship as a productive aspect of the encounter (Tang 2002). However, this was definitely a struggle, since I was filtering through my mind and into these encounters a great deal of largely tacit knowledge: family history, education, Finnish cultural history, the history of warfare, what I had tasted in my grandma’s kitchen, played with in her house which was my childhood home, read in the books on Karelian women by Finnish novelists, such as Iris Kähäri or Laila Hietamies, seen in the film *The Unknown Soldier*, based on Väinö Linna’s novel, every Independence day. This was all dear to me but was difficult precisely to write about because it was so taken-for-

granted, and in some cases it had to shift or more strongly change if I was to recognise the validity of the stories and pasts told in my research encounters.

At this stage, I also received some criticism about how I was positioning myself in relation to my interviewees. A paper I presented at a symposium was interpreted as presenting a non-reflective identification with the subject of my study, with Dominick LaCapra's (1999, p. 699; see also LaCapra 2001) idea of 'secondary trauma' being applied to my work. Another criticism on a different occasion was that on the one hand I had put myself at the mercy of those doing, living and experiencing, while on the other hand I was also a listener and analyst, with the result that my work had a particularized relation to objectivity and subjectivity, being between what was called sterile 'objectivism' and the kind of 'non-reflective subjectivism' that results from (imagining) being one with the research subject. I was alarmed by these comments. Why this talk about trauma? Either I had it all wrong or else what I said was being seriously misunderstood when I gave presentations of my work. In both cases, the comments made were so serious that I had to ask whether I was an adequate translator and analyst of the material I was handling. This was not because I was indulging in self-pity, but because I had taken seriously Walter Benjamin's idea, which he writes of regarding language-to-language translations, that "the language of a translation can – in fact, must – let itself go, so that it gives voice to the *intentio* of the original not as reproduction but as harmony, as a supplement to the language in which it expresses itself, as its own kind of *intentio*. (...) A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully." (Benjamin 1999, p. 79.)

Talal Asad (1993, pp. 189–190) recognises that Benjamin's idea of translation leaves neither the original nor the receiving language (or culture) unchanged, and he applies this to what he calls 'unequal languages', commenting that "The relevant question therefore is not how tolerant an attitude the translator ought to display toward the original author (an abstract ethical dilemma) but how she can test the tolerance of her own language for assuming unaccustomed forms". In Asad's view, the inequality of

languages is a product of power, and his alternative is to accept and honour the differences between languages. Thus translating is not about adjustment, but about the presence of the original in the new time and place, something Susan Buck-Morss (2003, p. 7) agrees with, arguing that languages could be mutually open to transformations. Consequently, my worry became my own power position. If the more critical comments were right and I was ‘understanding’ to the point of assimilation, then I was not listening to what I was being told, but simply re-presenting it to other people. In other words, power was involved, even if not in a traditional academic way. Certainly, any hint of identification frightened or disturbed those who reacted to my symposium paper, although I would propose that they had read this into it, that I had never over-identified but that they could not distinguish this from a dialogical approach and my respect for the other parties to this and our co-production of the stories told and ideas developed.

The third question about translation I want to explore here concerns why my adequacy in translating is a relevant question. If how I did this was a variant on the traditional academic exercise of power, then I would not be doing anything as a researcher that had not been done before. I would not, as I had proclaimed that I would, write of women in history, instead I would only write treat them as others had, as a small pitiful group that needs understanding and care while being given a chance of their being written about. But I did not want to be writing for or of oppressed women who had had some terrible misfortune in their lives. My determination was still to translate adequately some accumulated thoughts and understandings about a sixty year period of Finnish history which remained untold by the Karelian war widows who had fled their homes and never returned to them except as tourists.

I had from the beginning resisted the idea of war widows being categorized as victims, because of what and how they talked about their lives in the interviews with me, and before that because of my experience of my grandmother and her life ‘after the war. I do believe that they have faced very severe life situations, but that does not automatically place them in the traumatized victim category. These women were, and

are, able women, and what they needed was to talk about their losses in a way they never had done before. There was a ‘long silence’ about the war generally, due to Finland’s geographical position and cautious foreign politics, and its war widows have not been inscribed into the historiography of WWII or into Finnish contemporary history until this research now. If the war widows are not a part of war and its meanings, then it is necessary to ask if they are seen as historical and social subjects at all. Are they part of history? And have they made history? This leads me to ask an even more seditious question: where is indeed ‘the war’, to whom does it belong, and who has been excluded from it?

This is a political question, directly linked to my role and position as a researcher in history-writing. I am not trying to ‘save a voice’ from the realms of oblivion, or to ‘tell the truth’. My quest is thoroughly contemporary. Empirically, these women’s stories represent the core of what recurs in every war: women are widowed and children orphaned, homes annihilated. This rarely becomes a conceptual inquiry about what the war and its aftermath consist of – ‘the war’ does not include such things. Tzvetan Todorov (1996, 295–296) concludes his remarkable book with an appeal to recognise the moment when we are asked to act for strangers as we would for our loved ones: “If we should find ourselves unable, when the moment comes, to meet the stranger’s gaze – and to be moved by it – then woe to him who is lost, who has wandered far from his people.” At the beginning of my thesis I tried to imagine a railway station full of tired war refugees, doing so from the location of today while sitting in my home study. Those refugees had gathered at the station in a southern city of Lahti in Finland, my home town now, on their way from the Karelian Isthmus to a safer place. They were escaping from the war that had started the last day of November 1939, later known as the Winter War. In the end of this I asked who they were. With the formulation of the question, I wanted to draw attention to how this war-torn and uprooted group of people consisted of well-rounded individuals, contrary to how in descriptions of war the people forced to flee with scarce possessions are often presented as a faceless and nameless crowd.

Virginia Woolf (1976, p. 65) wrote that even the events mean little if the person to whom such things happened is left out: “So they say: ‘This is what happened’; but they do not say what the person was like to whom it happened. And the events mean very little unless we know first to whom they happened.” This difficulty which Woolf described in relation to depicting people as the subject of life-writing as exists concerning research on people’s life stories, and I think particularly so regarding war-related research. War talk is in the plural or in the passive. Wars displace masses, wars destroy societies, people are killed and lives are shattered, plans for the future are broken down. Yet a collected array of destroying events and shattered effects is not the meaning of war to an individual. Consequently, in my research on war widows, I wanted to stop the movement of the crowd at the station and with my first question constrain more than invite readers to follow the lives of those to whom the war was happening in their lives. The question here was not a rhetorical one, because I had certain specific women in mind. The selected group first consisted of the five war widow interviewees: Bertta Kaukinen, Kyllikki Iloranta, Sylvi Ahola, Helmi Parikka and Eeva-Liisa Rötkö. Later they were joined by the women whom I met through the archival sources I researched: Tyyne Koli, Impi Sinkkonen, Marjatta Kainulainen, Anna Kuismanen, and Lahja Selonen. The whole written account of my research project acts as an answer to the question of who the war refugees were, concerning these particular women. By the end of the thesis – that is, now, at the moment of these concluding remarks – these women would be recognisable through their stories about their lives lived as the individual and contemporary women they are, and not as homogenized cases of ‘war widows’ or ‘Karelian refugees’.

However, I am not saying that how I represent my women I interviewed, or the women who described their lives in their life stories and through their pension applications letters, is a ‘correct’ or ‘ultimate’ version of their lives. Such ‘validity’ and indeed reconstruction more generally is not referentially sought for here (Stanley 1992, p. 7). I can ‘know’ only fragments of their lives, and this is what my readers can know although in an even more fragmentary way and in the context of my narrative account of this. Consequently, these fragments are intricate co-productions and negotiations of what has been said by them and what has been read into their

stories. This comment takes my argumentative point back to the earlier discussion of my epistemological position as a researcher. I do not claim neutrality but acknowledge that I have influenced my source data by my interpretative presence which has added to the war widow stories links and traces that have surfaced in the context of my research (Temple & Young 2004, pp. 163–164). Including my own history and that of my family into reading and interpreting the research materials I have presented in the thesis is an aspect of this acknowledgement of the researcher's personal as well as analytical presence.

Recognising presence also requires recognising my inevitable partiality, for, like other participants, I have a point of view and perceive the world and my research through this. This in turn calls for analytical reflexivity about the research materials I have engaged with, and I have been attentive to these analytical processes as far as it has been possible within the framework and confines of a thesis. Through this analytical practise and method of enquiry, readers of this thesis have been given an opportunity to deduce their own interpretive 'versions', from the excerpts of interview transcripts and the archival notes (all of which are my products too), the introductions to the research scenes and situations, as well as the facts, assumptions, opinions, implicit or explicit meanings and assumed or imagined memories that I have included or readers may surmise I have omitted. This reflexive analysis, and the associated continued emphasis on trying to make each step in the research process explicit, both manifests the contingency of the choices made and indicates the intellectual and evaluative criteria which are sometimes implicit as well as (I hope) mainly explicit in what I have written and which I would like to ask readers to use to think about the thesis overall.

The concept and activity of 'telling' has a particular resonance in this thesis. In this context, 'telling' is much more than just telling stories, for there is much more to it than the specific stories – the telling itself. That is, to me the term includes telling of and the telling in the mundane, the everyday, the quotidian, which may not be 'shaped' (as stories are re/told and shaped) and which conveys all the more powerfully the fabric of the lives of the widows during and after their loss. The idea

of 'war's times' is closely related to this and has central importance in my thesis: recognising just how complex, how far-reaching, and for the individuals concerned so unending, war's times are has been an achievement and I think is crucial for understandings the resonance of these tellings of loss and life thereafter. Overall, then, the thesis has produced an argument organised around ideas about and practices concerning loss, telling, war's times, research encounters; all these are all involved. For me, and I hope readers of the thesis, they fit together and convey something that is new about the extraordinary ordinary complexities of times and loss.

In 'Grandmother's Wall Rug', I wrote that I will return to telling what I found out about my grandmother from her niece when I interviewed her and from her nephew in a conversation with him during our trip to Karelian Isthmus, to the village where my extended family had their ancestral lands but which they had had to abandon in 1940 and again in 1944. Both of them told me how my grandmother was a skilled dressmaker and designer, and how she started to support herself with this skill of hers when she had lost her husband in the Winter War on 13 February 1940. After her return to Karelia in 1941, she opened a small dressmaker's studio in the house that she got built for herself because of her war widow's status. I only knew my grandmother as a farmer and her farm was my first home, too. According to the nephew, farming was not my grandmother's ambition, but she wanted a permanent home and to secure a heritage for her son, which is why she started a so called 'cold farm', without any buildings or fields ready when she bought the place some years after the second evacuation. After this purchase her sewing was limited to some dresses for her nieces. I do not know if she ever regretted her choice or felt that she had to give up her dressmaker's career, but clearly she had been compelled to make decisions that affected her life. I could only think that this particular change of plans was one of the consequences of war in her life.

On 13 February 2006, I was walking across a very windy bridge in Helsinki, on the way to give a lecture in the University of Helsinki on the subject of war widows and loss (the lecture series was called 'The Politics of Home'). That day, it was exactly sixty-six years since my grandfather had been killed in the front, and it had been

freezing cold then, too. Later that same month my grandmother fled from their home with her ten-month-old son. I was thinking how long the traces of that day and month had reached through war's times, for in a short I was going to climb on a podium and talk about those events to an audience over twenty years younger than me. Yet it was also all so very haphazard and contingent, since if he had not died in the war and my grandmother been widowed, I might not have chosen this as my research subject. But I had, and the city of Helsinki was filled with landmarks concerning my work and the war, for I had walked past the State Treasury and I was about to pass the Folklore Archives building, both crucially linked to my thesis, as key archival locations for widows' accounts of their war experience. It was only after the lecture that I realized that this day, 13 February, was also the day when Dresden had been bombed, with devastating results. My first remembrance of the day's personal importance had to be put into a new perspective: there were many of us who were thinking of our relatives that day, wherever in Europe or elsewhere these people were. This was a useful moral and ethical reminder of wars' times and one which can help finish this doctoral thesis. Telling war begins as 'my story', as a personal history of an individual in a particular place and time. Simultaneously telling war's times is a weave of joined and looped personal histories and memories and an overall view of violence and its aftermaths in society. This dense and complex pattern of telling war's times has been highlighted in my thesis, with 'war's times' as the key concept in referring both to war's long-term personal, and to its societal inter-personal and inter-generational, consequences.

My doctoral thesis, 'Telling Absence: War Widows, Loss and Memory', has presented some tellings of evacuated Karelian war widows' stories which were previously absent from the academic historiography of war. By these tellings, not only has a gap in knowledge been filled, but the thesis has also added to understanding of wars and their social and emotional effects more generally. This has been reached for through coalescing, loss, telling, research encounters and war's times; and, as a particular characteristic of this thesis, to its new combination of war history and historical sociology, its juxtaposition of 'then' and 'now' through telling

the historical as part of – and – produced within the everyday, the vernacular, the quotidian.

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Appendix 1 (Loipponen 2001a)

Newspaper Call, *Karelia* Newspaper, 12.4.2001

Dear Karelian Evacuated War Widows,

My research subject concerns the survival of Karelian evacuated women in their re-settlement destinations. My research is called 'The Text Rugs of Life - Survival Stories of Karelian Evacuated Women'.

I am looking for war widows to participate and to be interviewed for my study. If you are a war widow or if you know of one, please contact me for us to meet.

I am also interested in diaries, letters and other written material of that time. Also those who settled in Sweden or elsewhere are welcome to participate.

My research will be part of an academic postgraduate project for a university. I have a Masters Degree in Philosophy and I work in the Lahti University of Applied Sciences. From my father's side, I come from the village of Kauniskangas in Äyräpää.

Please contact me at the following address ...

Hope to hear your stories,

Jaana Loipponen

Lahti